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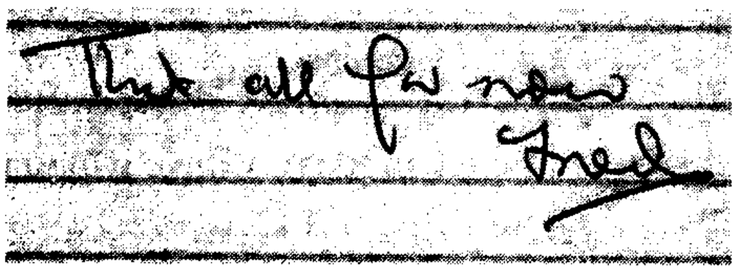

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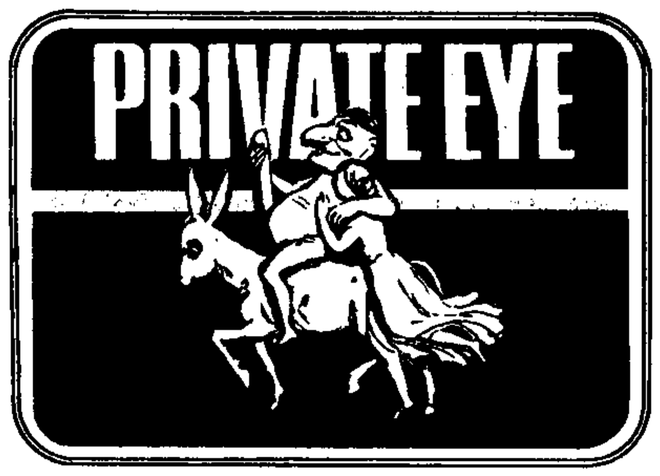

Plenty of bottle

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IN THE TEAROOM

As Labour moves its headquarters from Millbank to Old Queen Street, general secretary David Triesman confirms that the party's finances have been in Queer Street for some time. And when political parties in office start publicly sobbing about their penury, wise taxpayers should take a firm grip on their wallets.

Mr Triesman and party chairman Charles Clarke have already convinced John Prescott, David Blunkett and Robin Cook of the case for state funding of political parties and expect to have most of the rest of the cabinet onside by the end of the week. The prime minister, however, remains in one of his customary dithers, agreeing "in principle", but wanting to test likely public reaction before he jumps.

As usual, the very act of "public consultation" has itself been turned into a cunning scheme. First of all Labour will float all-out state funding. We will, predictably enough, take exception to handing over tens of millions at every general election of public funds to the French company JC Decaux, owners of poster sites around Britain. Labour (whose own private research has already shown that poster advertising is a waste of time and money) will then put forward a slimmed down scheme that will help pay their research staff and £5m mortgage, which they'll sell to the rest of us as a jolly reasonable compromise.

But do they really need our money? After all, Labour's debt is peanuts compared with the £17m the Conservatives owed in 1995. By the time of the general election two years later, Lord Harris had not only got the Tories out of that hole, but raised an extra £20m for blowing on pisspoor posters.

The sad fact is that they really do need our money. It seems that Messrs Triesman and Clarke once had high hopes of the secret files of the old Millbank High Value Donors Unit, whose computer database could only be accessed by fund-raising whiz Amanda Delew, previous general secretary Margaret MacDonagh and Tony Blair's middle east envoy Lord Levy. When the new regime took over they wasted no time before tapping-in the secret password and were confident of finding the names and addresses of generous souls who were not pornographers, crooks or practitioners of old Levantine banking practices. Surely, they thought, there must be dozens of straight-forward, honest business folk from whom Labour could take shed-loads of money without risk of embarrassment. Er... apparently not.

'Urquhart'

Back in February on the BBC's *Question Time*, steelworker Andrew Parr asked some awkward questions of the solicitor-general, Harriet Harman. He was concerned about the impact a steel company called ISPAT might have on the British steel industry.

After the programme he wrote to Harman detailing his worries. ISPAT, he said, employed fewer than 70 people in Britain while his company, ASW, employed more than 1,300 at Sheerness, Cardiff and Belfast. ISPAT's not altogether glorious role in the purchase and closure of Irish Steel, he wrote, had a major impact on the closure of steelworks at Shelton, Stoke on Trent. Yet ISPAT and its boss Lakshmi Mittal had got a generous puff from Tony Blair in a letter he wrote to the Prime Minister of Romania. Mr Parr's view was that ISPAT and Mr Mittal would do more harm than good to the British steel and "may result in the loss of British jobs".

On 10 July Mr Parr's suspicions were confirmed, when his firm ASW went into liquidation with the probable loss of 1,300 jobs, including his own. Foreign competition was one reason given. Another, even more persuasive, came from *Metal Bulletin*, which reported that a rescue deal had been agreed with two banks, Natwest and Lloyds, but that the banks had pulled the plug because they could not resolve a dispute with their credit insurer, Gerling NCM.

The *Bulletin* quoted a spokesman for the trading house that was to supply the money for the deal as saying: "Basically the banks wouldn't renew the credit agreement because of a disagreement with the credit insurers which has nothing to do with the company."

Whatever the cause – whether the Romanian industry or the British banks – Britain's largest steel maker is closed, the workers are to be sacked but Mr Mittal's handsome donation of £100,000 to the Labour party will never be forgotten.

The *Eye* confidently predicts that pisspoor exam board Edexcel is about to attract more bad grades from colleges and schools whose exam papers and coursework have gone missing.

For example, two former Edexcel examiners are still receiving big bundles of work to be marked – and it's not even in their specialism.

An expert in English as a foreign language, who does not want to be named, said that though she resigned a year ago she has just received a pile of work from a school in Reading on leisure and sport. Not long ago, she also received a bulky delivery from China, addressed to her home but meant for someone else.

Malcolm Robins, a mathematician and consulting engineer who resigned in January 2001, last month received a 17-inch stack of papers on nursing and social work – the latest efforts of hopeful candidates to be sent to him, despite his repeated phone calls and letters to Edexcel.

Noting the hand-written labels on the parcels, he concluded that "Edexcel appears to be in freefall. The futures of many candidates are being jeopardised by carelessness at Edexcel headquarters."

"Oh dear – you look like you've had a holiday..."

"We want to be divorced in church"

NEWS

ONCE upon a time, a group of public servants ran the National Grid. There was no complaint from the regional electricity companies or consumers, and most people were happy with the service.

Then in 1990 came privatisation and the formation of a new company called National Grid plc, better known to *Eye* readers as National Greed.

National Greed has recently published its annual report and accounts, and shareholders are pleased and proud to read on page one of an operating profit for the year of £874m. No doubt, they will have mused, the directors deserved the massive pay rises and bonuses they paid themselves. Roger Urwin, for instance, chief executive, had his remuneration package increased from £436,000 to £794,000. Stephen Box was up from £455,000 to £532,000 and altogether director goodies were up 22 percent.

But what are these entries on page 19? "The results for 2001-02 include net exceptional pre-tax losses of £953.5m (£893.4m post-tax). This reflected losses arising from many sources, including "an impairment of the group's Latin American telecoms investments amounting to £290.4m pre-tax" and "an impairment of the group's investment in Energis amounting to £392.1m".

There was also a loss arising from a disastrous venture in foreign exchange that brought "exceptional items" losses up well above the figure for operating profit. Whether Messrs Urwin, Box or anyone else was involved in the South American enterprise or any of the other disastrous National Greed investments is not stated in the accounts.

WHEN Manhattan district judge Jed S. Rakoff had to appoint a court monitor for the enormous civil fraud suit brought by the securities and exchange commission (SEC) against WorldCom, he chose one Richard Breeden.

Breeden was appointed by President George Bush Snr as head of the SEC from 1989 to 1993. While in the post he had to deal with a rather awkward complaint against the president's son, George W. The young businessman Dubya was on the board of Harken Energy when he sold stock in Aloha Petroleum in circumstances that looked very like insider trading.

The case against George W seemed powerful, but fortunately for him it did not impress the man who is now the new court monitor in the WorldCom case. Mr Breeden rejected the complaint and Bush father and son were both mightily relieved.

When he was asked the other day by a *New York Times* reporter whether his sale of stock when he was a director of Harken "amounts to the same kind of corporate misbehaviour you're now criticising", the president replied: "Everything I do is fully disclosed. It's been fully vetted." So that's all right, then.

STREET OF SHAME

AS THE *Sunday Express* runs yet more stories about an exceedingly tenuous link between the *Daily Mail* and prostitution, media pundits are exhorting the *Mail* to abandon the pact whereby it promised not to mention that Richard Desmond is a pornographer.

The *Mail* offered the deal after the *Express* published a story about the "love child" of young Lord Rothermere, boss of Associated Newspapers. But as Roy Greenslade pointed out in Monday's *Guardian*, the arrangement has worked solely to Desmond's advantage. "If I were [Paul] Dacre I would urge Rothermere to tear up the agreement with Desmond. After all, the cat is out of the bag: we all know about the child."

Indeed so: but there may be other felines still lurking in Dirty Des's bag. What terrifies Associated Newspapers is the rumour that the *Express* is sitting on a quite different story, about one Terry Clemence – a property developer and former car dealer whose controversial purchase of the old Brompton hospital was the subject of an unflattering investigation by the national audit office (NAO) three years ago. If the *Mail* attacks Desmond, executives fear that the *Express* will run its Terry Clemence material.

Why should this prospect cause such jitters? Because Terry's daughter Claudia is, er, Lady Rothermere.

EVEN *Daily Mail* hacks, few of whom are bleeding-heart liberals, recoiled in horrified amazement when they saw how the paper's pisspoor cartoonist Mac (aka Stan McMurtry) had dealt with the story of the IVF mix-up which gave a white couple a black baby.

Mac's drawing shows two women arriving at an infants' school with their young children. "I'm sure there's nothing to worry about, Eileen," one tells the other. "But why not ring the hospital just to put your mind at rest?" The joke is that Eileen's son is a monkey. Dressed in school uniform. Geddit?

What no one at the *Mail* can understand is why editor Paul Dacre let the cartoon through, given that jibes about black people and chimpanzees have been a staple of racist comedians and football hooligans for years – and that Dacre claims to be genuinely sensitive about his newspaper's fascist past ("HURRAH FOR THE BLACKSHIRTS").

Naturally, no *Mail* hack has been brave enough to ask him directly. The assumption is that either he didn't look at the cartoon before printing it, or he simply didn't geddit. A third possibility – that he actually found it funny, and that all the Stephen Lawrence angst was a mere stunt – is, of course, too absurd to contemplate.

IN A thunderous full-page rebuke, Simon Heffer of the *Daily Mail* castigates those who were amused by the decapitation of Margaret Thatcher's statue. "Lady Thatcher has become someone against whom no insult can be deemed too strong, no slur too unjust, no ill-will too malevolent." He calls for an end to "routine abuse" dished out by the "sneering classes".

A mere two pages later, columnist Ephraim Hardcastle asks: "Is deputy prime minister John 'four homes' Prescott looking for a new place to lay his fat head?" If even Heffer's own newspaper won't heed his plea for more respect and fewer insults towards politicians, what hope is there for civilisation?

ALTHOUGH the video of his brutal execution has appeared on the wilder parts of the web, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl's employers and friends have largely succeeded in persuading reputable internet service providers to remove it from their sites.

But in a new low Britain's *Sunday Sport* has become the first publication in the world to print uncensored stills of Pearl's decapitation.

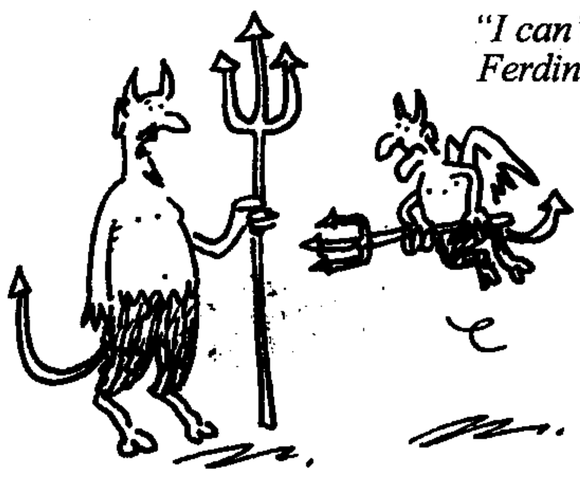
Across two pages, the "BEHEADED" feature tracks his death, picture by picture:

"SICK: Evil gunman with Daniel"; "EVIL: The evil gunmen first put a bullet in Daniel's chest then, as blood gushes out of his wound, they begin the grizzly task of beheading him"; and so on.

The following three photos show the machete attack. A final frame is described as "TROPHY: The tragic reporter's head is held aloft by a kidnapper so his crazy colleagues can get a clear shot for their sick video."

Amazingly, alongside the snuff shots, *Sport* publisher David "The Voice of Common Sense" Sullivan uses his weekly column to criticise reality TV like C4's *Big Brother*: "Surely human misery should not be dressed up as entertainment" etc.

Were Sullivan's use of these pictures to become known in the US, it's possible he and his business partners David and Ralph Gold could be prevented from entering the country the next time they visit. There could even be serious economic consequences for the Golds' "Ann Summers" chain, as well as Sullivan's assorted business ventures, including his websites. That's if the Americans find out of course.

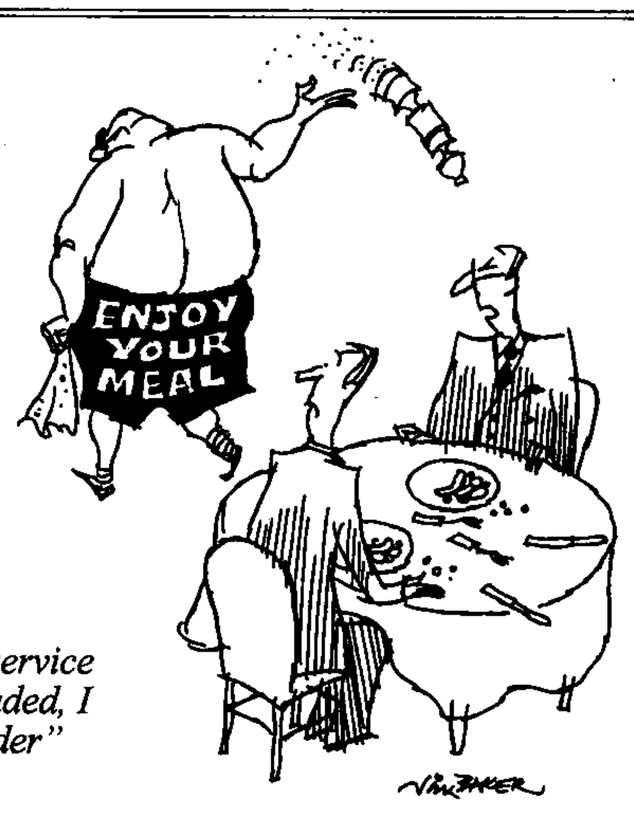


"I can't afford Rio Ferdinand's soul"

"I HAD thought that *Celebrity Sleepover* represented an unbeatable depth record for BBC1," *Independent* television critic Tom Sutcliffe wrote last Wednesday. "It's difficult to believe, I grant you, but *My Worst Week* sinks even lower."

The new series, which revisits old tabloid scandals, took a tremendous battering from the *Indie* critic. "Someone may try to tell you that all this offers a revelatory account of the way the mass media operate in Britain," Sutcliffe thundered. "Don't believe them. In fact, if you can reach them, hit them over the head with a rolled-up copy of the *News of the World* until they come to their senses… In every sense, *My Worst Week* wallows in other people's dirt."

Alas! This stern denunciation was slightly sabotaged by the cover story of the *Independent* review section the very same day – a two-page interview with Antonia de Sancha, revisiting the moment 10 years ago when her affair with Tory minister David Mellor was "splashed across the tabloids". Will Sutcliffe now take his own advice and whack *Indie* editor Simon Kelner over the head with a rolled-up newspaper?



"Is service included, I wonder"

HACKWATCH

Getting Jaded

ONCE again *Big Brother* has thrown up someone we all love to hate: a contemptuous, brain-dead loudmouth, utterly unprincipled, prepared to do almost anything to get attention, the personification of so much that is wrong with Britain today. Step forward Kevin O'Sullivan, the *Mirror's* so-called "anti-Big Brother correspondent".

For most of the summer O'Sullivan has been ranting to a bemused nation about how much he hates the "halfwit house". "Do we really care?" has been his refrain. We might not, but he clearly does: every day *Mirror* readers who don't care are treated to at least 500 words chronicling the previous day's activities, plus O'Sullivan's opinions and the mandatory sideswipe at Channel 4 for setting the whole freak show up in the first place. For an "anti-correspondent" he has a strange predilection for the show.

Although few hacks can match O'Sullivan for rank hypocrisy and his pointless, almost scary spumes of vitriol against the hapless contestants, several papers have tried. The treatment meted out to dental nurse Jade Goody has been notable not just for its personal viciousness but the astonishing duplicity of the charges against her.

The most persistent of these, ironically, is that Jade is two-faced. Which is quite something coming from the tabloids. On 2 July the *Sun* asked: "How will Jade cope when she finds out she's the most hated woman in Britain?" In the same piece agony aunt Deidre Saunders commented that "we should not be too quick to judge Jade" – under a headline screaming "PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1".

Such obvious double standards are nothing compared to the *Mirror's* ever-changing stance. Its piece on 2 July ended with "But do we really care?" Patently we did, as two days later page 25 was full of pictures from Jade's family photo album. The *Mirror* appeared to be coming round to the "happy, laughing, flamboyant" blonde.

Or maybe it wasn't. O'Sullivan was soon back to form: "With the fat-rolled body of a Michelin man and the hideous head of a pig, this terrifying monster is guaranteed to scare you to within an inch of your life." "No, it's too horrible," said the headline, although apparently it wasn't too horrible for a large picture-spread of Jade the "slug-like beast" going topless.

Unsurprisingly the *Mail* now decided to enter the fray; and 11 July saw Cindy Blake saving the nation from itself with a lengthy think-piece: "Random sex, drunkenness and bitchiness are now the staples of Reality TV… the Big Brother producers have exploited her for ratings". Sex, drunkenness, bitching and exploitation? Sounds horribly like middle-market journalism.

Another of Jade's failings to attract mockery has been her stupidity. Again O'Sullivan has made much mirth: "Shoplifter Jade recalled travelling on a plane with an escalator. No you ignoramus – that was the London Underground." In fact the ignoramus was the highly-paid hack, because what Jade actually said was "a plane with stairs", which is quite feasible on an aircraft with an upper deck. An apology appeared on p34 four days later, though not from O'Sullivan.

And then suddenly the fat, shoplifting, two-faced porcine monster had an admirer. Step forward, er, Kevin O'Sullivan, who on 13 July announced: "I've been waging a brilliantly conceived clandestine campaign to drum up the sympathy vote for the divine Ms Jade Goody." The day before he'd said: "No one likes her. In the world." But O'Sullivan's volte-face was nothing to do with a wily sub-plot. It had everything to do with the fact that the viewers were starting to think that Jade was cracking up under the strain and might top herself.

Hacks at the *Sun* must have started to worry too after the paper's "Vote out the Pig" logo attracted massive reader complaints. The public, perhaps through guilt or disgust at what their red tops had been writing, now decided they liked Jade after all.

The *Mirror*'s O'Sullivan tried to claim he'd started "all this anti-Jade stuff"; but according to Jim Shelley in the same paper three days later: "Any damage done to Jade's fragile mental state when she comes out will rest with Channel 4." Presumably his colleague O'Sullivan calling Jade a "2 out of 10 minger" on page 10 won't have done anything to lower her standing in the public mind.

As all papers everywhere begin hailing the greatest comeback since Lazarus, it's no surprise the *Mirror* is leading the about-turn. After all, its whole BB stance is one vast piece of humbug.

THE London *Evening Standard*'s determination to be the first to write about new restaurants may give its hacks indigestion if they continue at their present rate.

A few weeks ago Fay Maschler established a new all-comers' record by writing a review of Sumosan, a new Japanese eaterie, which appeared in print less than two days after the restaurant opened its doors. But this achievement was soon eclipsed by her colleague Charles Campion with his article about Chowki, a new Indian restaurant near Piccadilly Circus.

According to Campion's rave review, published in the *Standard*'s *ES* magazine on Friday 12 July, "it is hard to believe that Chowki is not just the product of some wistful daydream… Food 8/10, Ambience 7/10, Service 7/10, Value For Money 8.10."

Standard readers rushing to Chowki that evening did not agree with his high marks for ambience: they found the place was still a building site, with electricians and other workmen hastily trying to finish the job. Because of delays in building works, Chowki didn't open for business until Saturday 13 July – the day *after* trencherman Campion's review appeared.

O·B·N

[Charles Saatchi's] also a collector who has spent his life searching for the perfect piece of art and no doubt the perfect woman. He must be shrewd enough to know that he won't do better than Nigella.

LYNDA LEE POTTER
Daily Mail

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Warballs

"It was a tough week. I found out I was pregnant, Bing and I split up, I gave up smoking, alcohol and coffee, and then 11 September happened. My world collapsed and then the whole world collapsed."

— Elizabeth Hurley, *Harper's Bazaar*.

"Matt Damon is to star as Superman in a new movie that sees the Man of Steel battle against Batman. Director Wolfgang Petersen says: 'It is a clash of the Titans. Everything after 11 September is different.'"

— The *Sun*.

"Graham Kavanagh has revealed how a summer trip to New York helped ease the pain of Cardiff City's promotion play-off agony. Kavanagh realised what real devastation was during his week-long spell in the Big Apple, with New Yorkers still trying to come to terms with events of 11 September… But Kavanagh pointed out: 'In saying that, there's no getting away from the sense of agony I, the other players and the fans felt at what happened against Stoke last May.'"

— *Wales on Sunday*.

"Post 11 September, music is one of the most cohesive healers the world has known and brass instruments one of the most potent vehicles with which to promote humanity. The opportunities are there for us to grasp and a broadening out – making brass-interest stories from across the horizon available to all – will surely ensure that the glorious past of brass is matched by an equally bright future."

— Editorial in launch issue of *Essential Brass*.

"Dear editors and publishers, When I first heard of the availability of 3D photographs from 11 September, my initial instinct was: 'Haven't we already seen enough if this tragedy?' The first set of twelve 3D proofs arrived in my office in late December. I was in absolute awe… I present to you the opportunity to publish *Images of 9-11 in 3D*. No, this is not fun. This is not 3D as a gimmick. This is history!"

— Letter from John Jerit, president of American Paper Optics Inc ("world's leading manufacturer of paper 3D glasses and promotions"), flogging his wares.

"Since the retirement of Yves Saint Laurent last season, talk has been raging around Paris that couture is dead. And since another old-timer, Oscar de la Renta, who designs couture for Balmain, has also announced his retirement, must it be true? Well, not exactly. Sales of couture have reportedly been increasing over the past nine months. Pundits believe the upturn is a post 11 September wave of empathy…"

— *Daily Express*.

"We are doing a feature to commemorate 11 September in a positive way. So I am looking for women who are doing really positive, life affirming things this year on 11 September. These things can be by either coincidence or design. Maybe it's your birthday or you are having a baby, or getting married or getting engaged, or you're starting a new job, or you're going travelling or opening a new business, or even a divorce coming through… Anything interesting and positive. Please let me know ASAP if you can help."

— Circular from *New Woman* magazine.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"…Sophie Raworth is being tipped by corporation chiefs as the new Jill Dando…"

—Page 18, *Evening Standard*, 17 July.

"Blonde, bright Emily Maitless… is said to be 'the next Jill Dando'…"

—Page 25, *Evening Standard*, 17 July.

SO who has the reddest face at the baronial headquarters of the AEEU-Amicus union in Bromley, Kent, following the election of unknown former sheet metal worker Derek Simpson at the expense of Tony Blair's most trusted union boss, Sir Ken Jackson?

Once, cocky supporters of Sir Ken and his machine boasted that they had their own "United Caucus". Those outside the loop alleged that membership of it meant a fast track for preferment.

Meanwhile Roger "currant bun" Lyons, joint general secretary of AEEU-Amicus, which was formed by the merger of the white collar MSF union with the AEEU, is telling whoever will listen that "It's a fucking brilliant result!" Despite the merger Lyons and Jackson hated each other; and within a year of the coming together of the two unions, there was already talk of divorce: so much so that friends and foes alike christened Amicus "Animus".

Sir Ken and cronies ruled the AEEU (Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union) with a rod of iron for more than a quarter of a century. Previous alumni included Frank Chapple (subsequently Lord Chapple of Hoxton); and Eric Hammond, who took delight advising his electricians to cross the Wapping picket lines. Hammond has devoted his retirement to championing grammar schools in Kent.

Each time the leaders' grip has been threatened, the mighty union machine has rumbled to life and boarders have been repelled. The grip of the hard men, in Britain's most tightly run union, was further entrenched by merger with the electricians' union, EEPTU. And when members made the mistake of electing a left-wing president, Davey Hall, the tyros on the executive ensured he had a miserable time of it – so miserable that Hall "elected" to return to his native north-east.

The post of president was subsequently abolished. But the old guard didn't triumph this time. Simpson was confirmed the winner on the fourth count after it was discovered that a large bundle of ballot papers that had been awarded to Jackson were in fact due to Simpson. Jackson had "won" the first count by 800-odd votes, but after the ballot papers for Simpson had been counted for a second time, Jackson demanded a third recount. The third count found even fewer votes for Jackson; and the fourth had the Electoral Reform Society declare unequivocally for Simpson – who took the precaution of posting supporters around the building being used by the ERS.

Jackson initially refused to accept the result, demanding that his executive – where he enjoyed a majority – convene to investigate "irregularities". The nature of the irregularities to which he was referring is unknown and Jackson has since decided not pursue them. In the event the executive meeting became inquorate as a dozen members stalked out.

So Sir Ken certainly has a red face. But the reddest of all surely belongs to transport minister John Spellar, long-time back room fixer and EEPTU stalwart. It was Spellar who persuaded the near retirement age Sir Ken to run again and who prevailed on soft left senior union official Danny Carrigan not to throw his hat into the ring. It was Spellar who rejoiced at Sir Ken's decision earlier this year to sue both Derek Simpson – and the left wing *Tribune* newspaper – for libel.

Even as wiser counsel prevailed on Sir Ken to drop the action, Spellar pushed him to pursue it. And it was Spellar who advised Sir Ken not to bow to the inevitable, but fight for a complete rerun of the union election. Quite how a busy transport minister could find time for weekly Monday meetings with Jackson is a question Tony Blair might ask the eternally meddlesome Spellar.

Lord Callaghan, the former Labour leader, was one of the first to arrive with his daughter, Baroness Jay, Tony Blair's former leader in the House of Lords. Lord Callaghan was resplendent in a black sequinned dinner suit and pearl choker.

Daily Telegraph

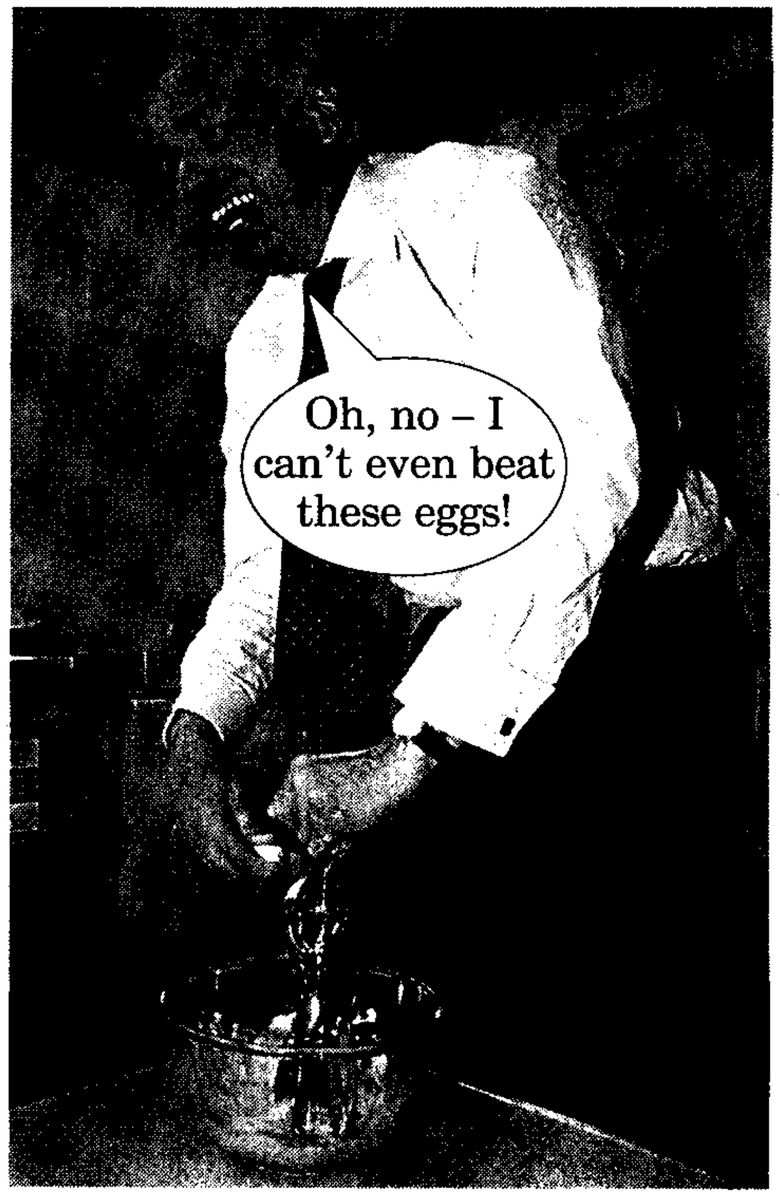
TORY shadow education secretary Damian Green likes to harangue Labour minister Estelle Morris about the poor performance of exam board Edexcel. But if he really wants to know about Edexcel's management, perhaps he should ask fellow Tories who are involved in running the incompetent examiners.

Until 2001 Edexcel employed Hartley Booth for three years as a "consultant" to run Edexcel's "Choice and Standards Project", which was intended to improve Edexcel's performance. Booth of course was the Tory MP in Margaret Thatcher's old Finchley seat until he resigned following allegations that he had had an affair with his researcher. The former Tory MP has no particular background in education: Edexcel told the Eye that he was hired because of his skills as a barrister and his impressive "project management" skills.

Another Tory, former Conservative lord chancellor Lord Mckay, was also brought in to work on Booth's project. Booth's salary was rumoured to be around £90,000 a year, although Edexcel says Lord McKay worked for free. McKay prepared a report into Edexcel's systems which found them to be efficient, just and robust – conclusions which may surprise teachers and pupils enraged by the board's performance.

Like Booth, McKay has no particular educational background. Edexcel says he was brought in as a "fresh pair of eyes" and that his report was well received by Labour education minister Baroness Blackstone.

TORY DESPAIR



PUBLIC health minister Hazel Blears has admitted that the government has consistently misled the Commons and the public when giving assurances that no UK vaccine contained material that could have come from mad cows.

There have been "misleading or inaccurate" statements on no fewer than five occasions, it emerges, since Lib Dem MP Norman Baker first raised concerns about vaccines derived from bovine material.

Eventually in October 2000, fears that BSE could have found its way into oral polio vaccines led to the vaccine's instant withdrawal "as a precautionary" measure. The vaccine had been made from calf serum dating back to 1985 when BSE was raging.

Blears made a grovelling apology to the Commons and said the blunders were "made in good faith". Government and health officials blame the Medicines Control Agency, which licences products and monitors safety, for passing on duff information it had itself received from the drug companies.

"There must be easier ways to release equity on the house"

DISGRACED former Europe Minister Keith Vaz still has friends in high places. He was spotted a couple of weeks ago enjoying a convivial dinner with trade minister Patricia Hewitt in a Leicester curry house.

Vaz and Hewitt share neighbouring constituencies and it was surely good fortune that the two dined in a restaurant by the name of Friends.

HOME secretary David Blunkett's new criminal justice white paper aims to keep less serious offenders from jail but will actually swell numbers further.

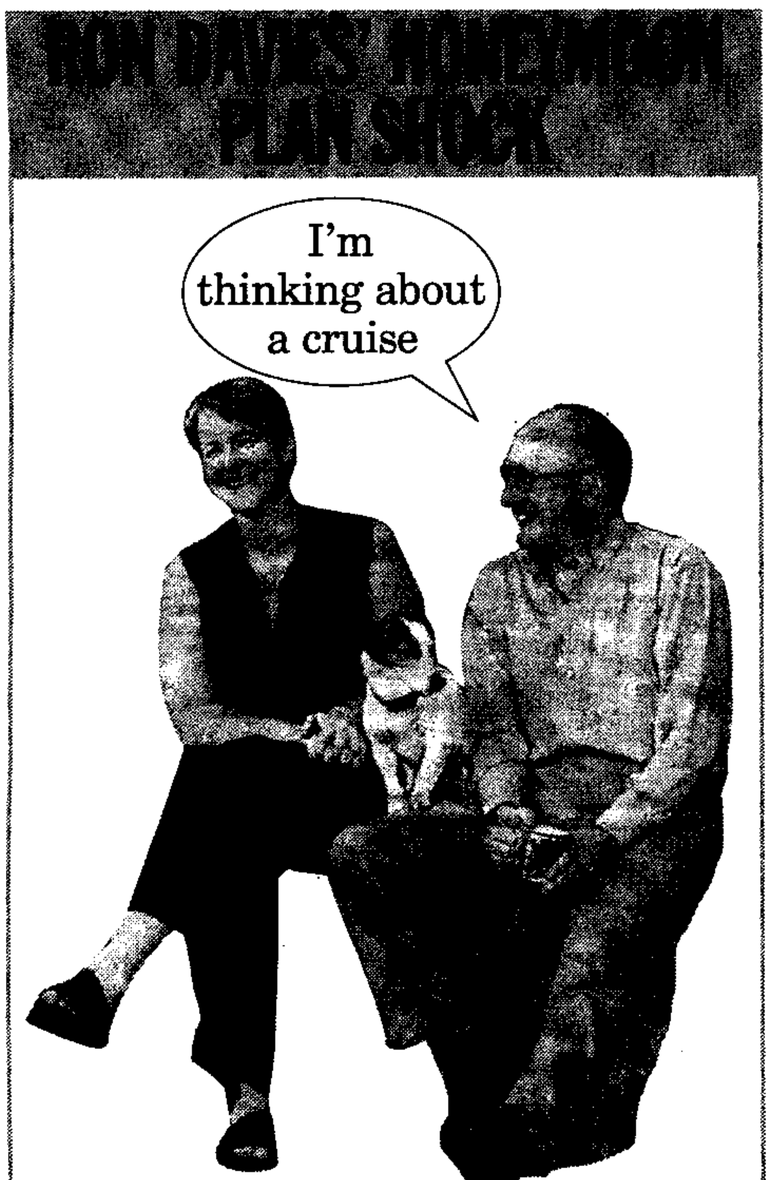
The reforms, which include increasing magistrates penalties and detaining some offenders for longer, have not been costed and nor has Blunkett calculated their effects on prison numbers.

But let's hope some of the new penalties, like "custody minus" – previously known as a suspended sentence – work better than earlier "new" Labour reforms.

Take drug treatment and testing orders, which sound fine in principle. More than half the 5,600 plus addicts who have been given them, usually for stealing to fund their habit, have failed to complete them or breached their strict conditions. They are then returned to court to receive a jail sentence instead.

Napo, the probation officers' union, has found that most then receive a sentence of around six months. And because they have technically been sentenced for theft, and not drugs, they can then qualify for a home detention curfew which enables prisoners serving short sentences to be released early.

So druggies can end up serving a month inside and be released without any treatment or supervision other than an electronic tag which keeps them at home at night and not in the day. A few more thefts to fund the habit and they are back through the revolving criminal justice door.



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The staff at Hinton Park wish all our clients a peaceful New Year.

LABOUR'S BUSINESS FRIENDS

US vice-president Dick Cheney's hi-jinks with his old firm Halliburton won't just embarrass George Bush but could stain Tony Blair's government too.

Halliburton is big here having originally secured military contracts under the Tories before Cheney's arrival. Its subsidiary Brown & Root took over management of Devonport dockyard and joined a private consortium taking over the Aldermaston atomic bomb factory.

After Cheney's arrival, Halliburton bought the Devonport nuclear dock in February 1997. But it suffered a setback in 2000 when it was thrown off the Aldermaston contract after the health and safety executive fined contractors for nuclear pollution. However, "new" Labour warmed to Halliburton as it got its military privatisation programme underway; and in April 2000 Cheney himself chaired a conference in Britain on privatising warfare.

The meeting at the ultra-establishment Ditchley Park Centre in Oxford was attended by John Spellar, then an armed forces minster, and various military mandarins. Martin Kitterick, a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers who advises the ministry of defence on PFI deals, spoke about the "Heavy Equipment Transporter" under which a private firm supplies tank transporting trucks and drivers. The drivers are "sponsored reserves" who can change from civilians to soldiers should shooting start. Within nine months of the conference Halliburton won the £300m transporter deal. It is now bidding for the Future Strategic Tanker Refuelling deal.

However, the Devonport deals are starting to go wrong. Firstly, the Trident refit trusted to Halliburton has gone £400m over budget and is 29 months late. And last year Halliburton's Devonport outfit was fined £60,000 for exposing 24 workers to asbestos.

THE stock market might be tumbling, but some of "new" Labour's favourite big businesses are having share price problems all of their own.

Amey, Jarvis, Serco and Capita, "corporate partners" in Labour's New Local Government Network, have all seen their shares drop severely as the City has grown nervous about the accounting of privatisation in general and Jarvis's involvement in the Potters Bar rail crash in particular.

Amey has lost three quarters of its share price since January; and central to the drop was its creative presentation of private finance initiative (PFI) figures. The firm had to admit that its expected £55m "profits" were in fact £18m losses. This was because of something called "Urgent Issues Task Force Note 51", a note issued by the Accounting Standards Board. It told the firm to stop pretending that the massive costs of bids for PFI projects – costs inflated by flocks of accountants and consultants – weren't costs at all. Amey suffered a second blow when London mayor Ken Livingstone delayed the tube privatisation and so deprived the firm of a big flow of government money.

Like Amey, Carillion too is changing its accounting procedures following the "Urgent Issues Task Force note 51". Admitting that its PFI bidding costs, with the attendant army of accountants, lawyers and consultants, are in fact expenditure, has wiped some £6m off profits and set the share price down too.

Carillion, the company formerly known as Tarmac, went from funding the Tories to schmoozing Labour and funding the New Local Government Network. Labour's Michael Meacher spoke on Carillion platforms at the party conference, and the firm sent staff "on secondment" to the cabinet office.

Another friend of the party whose share price has been hit by worries about accounting practices is the drug giant Merck. Its shares tumbled after it admitted its accounts included $12.4bn it had never received.

The phoney figures came from activity in generic drugs and Merck's attempts to move beyond drug manufacture and actively manage what passes for health care in the United States. Its subsidiary Medco is a "pharmacy benefits manager" which aims to cut drug costs for patients on Medicare or employer insurance schemes by pushing patients towards cheaper "no brand" generic drugs. Weirdly, it was pretending that money belonging to health insurers was actually Merck's. The sums were huge: up to 10 percent of Merck's overall revenue.

Merck has been cuddling up to Labour in precisely these areas of health service management and generic drugs. It regularly has a stall at the party conference and is keen to mix with ministers whenever health service management is discussed. At the last conference Merck was advertising two meetings with health secretary Alan Milburn as guest speaker. He was due to speak on a Merck platform on NHS performance before conference was disrupted by the terrorist attacks of 11 September.

Generics UK, a British firm in the "no brand" drugs business owned by Merck, was raided by the fraud squad this year.

THE most blatant example of accountants giving the government bum advice on privatisation while raking in cash from the private contractors who benefit from their advice emerges in Scotland.

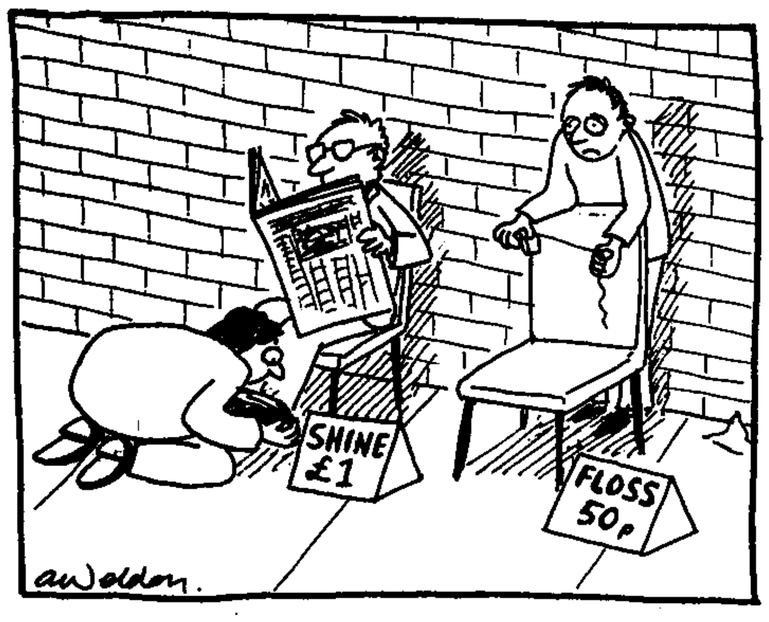
PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has a near monopoly there on giving advice on multimillion pound private finance initiative (PFI) deals in schools. At the same time it works for the PFI firms who earn millions from the schemes.

PwC advised councils involved in the Glasgow, East Renfrewshire and Balfron High School public-private partnerships (PPPs). The massive Glasgow scheme, worth £1.2bn over 30 years, hands the city's secondary schools to a consortium led by Amey. Games halls, classrooms and swimming pools have been closed and there have been health and safety incidents. To add insult to injury, the Scottish auditors found that "the result of the public sector comparator (PSC) test does not indicate compelling evidence that the PFI deal offers the most economic option compared to conventional procurement".

But why should PwC care? Fresh from advising Glasgow to appoint a consortium led by Amey, it went to work for a private consortium led by Amey bidding successfully to run Edinburgh's schools. It was the same story in England when PwC advised Waltham Forest council, which awarded a massive schools PFI to a consortium led by… guess who.

Sadly PwC's advice isn't cheap or always useful, according to the comparator test. In the Balfron High School project in Stirling, PwC advised the council on a deal which handed a secondary school to Jarvis in a deal that was so good for Jarvis it went to its bankers and renegotiated better terms, making a profit which is not passed on to the council. As Audit Scotland noted: "Refinancing of the project in March 2001 raises a question whether the original financing was as competitive as possible."

"Ah, you're the boy who wants to be a stuntman"



Court Circular

BRENDA'S decision to give Charles the Order of Merit was originally intended as one of two grand jubilee weekend announcements (Eye 1055), but a family spat with Prince William at its centre delayed the big event.

Alongside Charles's OM – a gong in the Queen's personal gift – was to have been the news that William was being made a counsellor of state. Counsellors are those empowered to act for the monarch when she is ill or has something better to do.

The Queen's four children are already counsellors and William was originally earmarked for the role when he reached his 18th birthday. But after much tabloid talk at the time of the crown passing straight from Brenda to William, both Charles and Buckingham Palace agreed that any announcement then would give the wrong message. This time round Charles intervened again, saying it would throw an unnecessary spotlight on his son, studying hard at St Andrews – when he isn't snogging Claudia Schiffer, that is – and considering his post-university options.

Buckingham Palace was unimpressed by this reasoning and so let the jubilee pass without announcing Charles's OM. It was persuaded against dumping it in the general birthday honours list at the behest of Brenda's treasurer Sir Michael Peat – soon to become Charles's private secretary – who has been striving to improve the mutually petulant relations between Buck House and the heir to the throne. But the palace succeeded in getting the last laugh by swamping its press statement about the OM with the publication of the annual civil list report. Ooh, boys and girls, do give over!

IN TONY BLAIR, Gordon Brown and Sir Michael Peat – the civil list trustees – Brenda has access to some of the slickest PR machines going, as anyone witnessing Peat's handling of the civil list report press launch would concur. Peat's successor, Alan Reid, acknowledges he has a hard act to follow.

One of Reid's first jobs will be to oversee the gradual decommissioning of Kensington Palace as a royal residence. While the Duke and Duchess of Kent are prepared to return to St James's Palace and the hard-up Gloucesters will go wherever they are told, Prince and Princess Michael will not be so easily moved. Princess Pushy reacted with characteristic anger to unfounded newspaper claims in the wake of the civil list report which alleged that the Michaels have agreed to pay a commercial rent of £50,000 for their Kensington Palace home rather than the £70 a week they currently stump up. She had a go at both her husband and their private office for letting the story run.

Surprisingly it has not yet been challenged on Prince Michael's own website. He is the only royal apart from Charles to have a personal site – and it is the only royal website with a press rebuttals page, ominously entitled "Articles and Apologies". It is a short and very dull read.

'Flunkey'

MAN IN THE EYE

ARCHIE NORMAN

COME ON down, Archie Norman. With senior managers and staff at the heavily indebted telecom giant Energis, he could collect as much as £250m in shares if, as predicted, the company relists on the stock market in a couple of years' time.

Indeed, there was much excitement in the City last week when it emerged that creditor banks wanted to install Norman, the Tory MP for Tunbridge Wells, as Energis' chairman. He had already featured in a doomed bid for the firm by venture capitalists Permira, but this appeared not to worry them. Like many in the business community, they clearly had the impression that Norman is a Wunderkind who brings a Midas touch to any venture he's associated with. A closer look at his career does not bear this out.

After success in the early 90s as head of the Asda supermarket chain, Archie fell into the trap which catches so many hubristic businessmen: he decided politics could benefit from his talents. Thanks to his friend Francis Maude, he was parachuted into the ultra-safe Tunbridge Wells seat in time for the 1997 general election. After complaints from local Bufton Tuftons, he realised that, if only for PR reasons, it might be a good idea to buy a house in the constituency.

As a partner at McKinsey's in the early 1980s, Norman had taken under his wing a young tea-boy (*shurely "up and coming business exec"? Ed.*) called William Hague. On becoming party leader in 1997, the protégé duly returned the favour by appointing his one-time master "chief executive" of the party – Norman had to have a title in keeping with his hard-nosed business background. He promised to breathe new life into the moribund organisation and increase party membership to 300,000. He failed spectacularly. It was also Norman who suggested taking the parliamentary party to Eastbourne for a weekend of bonding and brainstorming. Not since the annual Star Trek convention was held there had the town seen so many hopeless types in one place.

In any well-run organisation, these setbacks would have stalled his ascent but this, remember, was the Conservative party. At the beginning of 2000, Hague gifted him the transport and environment briefs and he immediately embarrassed the Tories. Under his chairmanship, it emerged that Asda had effectively tried to bribe Manchester city council to turn down an application from Kwiksave to build a competing outlet in the area. Despite stepping down as chairman in November 1999, Norman remained a consultant to Asda-Walmart (for an annual fee of £200,000) at the time of his front-bench appointment. Needless to say, the company's overall record on the environment was every bit as dismal as one would expect.

But still Hague kept faith. In October of that year, as shadow transport spokesman, it fell to Norman to grill the government over the rail crisis. While the resignation of Gerald Corbett and the rest of the Railtrack board could not come quickly enough for most people, Norman was heard to comment: "If he goes, it will be a great loss for the railway industry."

Well, he would say that. The pair share the same educational background – Cambridge and Harvard – and inhabit the same cosy corporate world where seats on the company board are carved up with one another over "power lunches" at the Institute of Directors. Sure enough, Corbett did go and it was no great loss to the rail industry. Interestingly, after buggering up the railways and trousering a hefty severance pay-off in the process, Corbett became CEO at Kingfisher, where Norman had served as group finance director in the 80s (thus proving the old line that nothing succeeds like failure). As if all this wasn't bad enough, Norman was himself personally tarred with Railtrack brush when it was disclosed that he was a director of the pisspoor maintenance outfit.

On the Commons floor, Norman was an unmitigated disaster. His despatch box performances made Geoffrey Howe look like the living reincarnation of Oscar Wilde. Even Cecil Parkinson was heard to mock him: "Just because Asda checkout girls smile at him, he thinks he's got the common touch."

Still, it's good to see he hasn't neglected his business interests. A look at the register of members' interests reveals that in addition to his consultancy work for Permira, he has performed the same endeavours for the American management buy-out specialists, Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts & Co, and is a partner in Mars Film. He also rakes in large fees on the lecture circuit.

Perhaps his finest hour came in November 1999 when, amid much excitement from an adoring City, he teamed up with fellow business Svengalis Nick Leslau, Nigel Wray and Julian Richer to acquire Knutsford, a small leather company in Cheshire whose total assets were worth little more than £5m. On the first day of the new regime the share price rose from 2p to 232p, giving Norman a paper profit of about £50m on his £500,000 investment and valuing Knutsford at £600m – more than Storehouse, the owner of BhS and Mothercare. "Awesome Foursome Turn £5m into £600m Overnight," the headlines drooled. By March 2001, when the hype had disappeared and the books were analysed – a pre-tax loss of £4.4m was recorded for that financial year – shares had slumped to 2.75p and Norman had moved on.

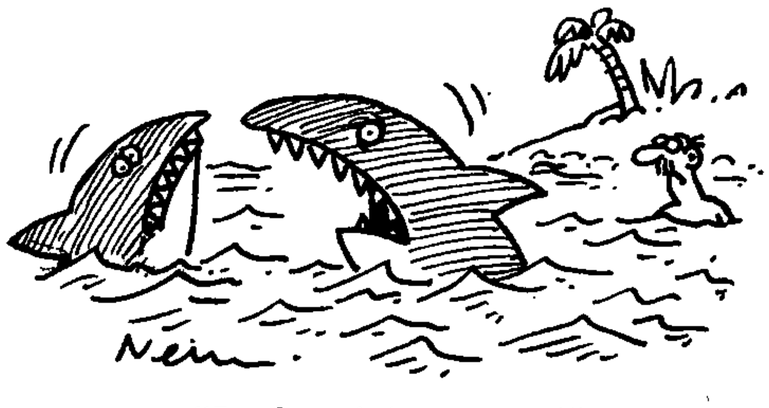
In 1999 he had also assumed the non-executive chairmanship of furnishings group French. It was the same old story: shares soared to 115p, only to have fallen to 23p by January 2001 when he told the company that he would be leaving to spend more time with the Conservative party to mastermind its brilliantly successful election campaign. That his departure from the board precipitated no discernible downward movement in its share price revealed the extent to which market confidence in the reassuring presence of Norman in the corporate boardroom had ebbed.

People in Tunbridge Wells might be wondering how Norman reconciles his endless business commitments with his duties as an MP. After all, he still has four years to serve out. Norman once proudly boasted: "I am the only FTSE-100 chairman ever to sit in the Commons." These days, it seems, he prefers to spend more time in boardrooms than in parliament.

CONFERENCE WATCH

THE UK regional rail conference in York in September "will offer an invaluable insight into the way forward for regional rail services". Or so it's claimed.

For a fee of £323 each, delegates will be able to hear pearls of wisdom from Ray Price, managing director of Arriva Trains Northern. His company managed to cancel thousands of trains last year, was fined £2m for poor performance.



"Look out! Accountant!"

DOING THE ROUNDS

WHY won't the British Medical Association let specialist registrars vote on whether to accept the proposed new consultants' contract? If existing consultants vote to accept it, they can choose between the new and existing contracts; but specialist registrars will be forced to work under the new contract when they become consultants.

It doesn't seem unreasonable to give them a vote, and yet an emergency motion demanding a ballot was thrown out of the BMA annual meeting at Harrogate. So what has the BMA got to hide?

The headline "achievements" of the new plan look superficially enticing: a government climbdown on the private practice ban for new consultants; a time limit on hours worked; and the potential of a 20 percent performance-related pay rise. But its real danger for consultants is that power over their working conditions and pay is largely handed over to the trusts which employ them, and the NHS has a long track record as an abusive employer that fails to deliver agreed job deals. Forty percent of junior doctors are still working outside the New Deal conditions they were promised in 1996, and the European working time directive that all consultants should work no longer than 56 hours a week from 2000 is so widely abused as to be laughable.

The small-print of the new contract invites further abuse. Job plans between consultants and trusts have to be agreed "if possible", but where disagreement occurs, "employers decide". This gives trust managers and health secretary Alan Milburn enormous control over consultants. Milburn and the DoH set the targets, managers will have to hit them or face the sack, and consultants scurry around doing exactly what they're told. Any specialist interests or research that don't fit with Milburn's targets will be ditched or have to continue outside NHS time.

As for the much-touted pay rise, the contract is ominously woolly. "We expect the majority of consultants will progress." Hardly a compulsion to pay up when the money runs out. The lifting of the ban on private practice for new consultants also looks like a mirage when the plan obliges them to work 44-48 hours for the NHS before being "allowed" to do private work. And changes to the working time directive may soon mean that doctors of any grade are only allowed to work 48 hours a week in total, thus making the contract an effective ban on private work.

DOCTORS have a long history of bleating about their pay and conditions, and most employees in the real world have targets to meet and performance-related pay.

But in such a politicised service as the NHS, targets will inevitably be skewed towards whatever seems a likely short-term vote-winner to Whitehall, and those with rare or unfashionable illnesses won't get a look in. Health provision is far too complex to be reduced to a tick box exercise.

NHS STAFF tend to put in the hours needed to do the job, and the real crisis underlying the shortfall in capacity is manpower.

All previous job plans for juniors and seniors alike have been widely flouted because there simply aren't the staff to do the job the government demands. This crisis is likely to cause meltdown in the next two years when the European working time directive starts to apply to junior doctors too. Their weekly hours have to be reduced to 56 from August 2003 and to 48 by 2009. This includes all time spent on call and resident in the hospital, whether working or not.

The only possible way to run the NHS under these conditions is a major reconfiguration, concentrating specialist services in fewer hospitals and closing many of the smaller casualty departments. The government has shied away from hospital closures since the humiliation of the Kidderminster election defeat, but until it grasps the nettle, hospital doctors will continue to be widely abused.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

THE fog is lifting from Network Rail (NR), Railtrack's successor, to reveal how far "new" Labour will go to shirk accountability for public services.

The office for national statistics (ONS), the treasury's facts 'n' figures branch, has agreed with the treasury that Network Rail will be classed a private company. But why when the government will set it up, fund it and step in if there's trouble?

The ONS says NR is in the public sector during set-up and will revert to that sector if the government uses its emergency powers. But at other times it will be a private company and vanish from the treasury's balance sheet – as will the hefty government guarantees underwriting the company. It's never too late to learn the special American way of accounting, it seems.

While for financial purposes "new" Labour might want NR to be treated as a private company, for PR purposes it presents the company as a utopian body with only the good of society at heart. "Network Rail is a public-interest company… run for the benefit of the whole railway," purred transport secretary Alistair Darling. "There will be no shareholders and any operating surplus will be used for the benefit of the railway system." The inference is that shareholders are a bad thing: odd, then, that Labour is still hell-bent on involving them in even more public services through PFI schemes.

And will Network Rail really be as safe from shareholders' claws as Darling suggests? Its bondholders will take an annual payment in lieu of dividends; but most of NR's members will be from private rail companies, bent on maximising benefits for their shareholders. And NR will be almost as reliant as Railtrack on maintenance contractors, which have a duty to put their shareholders first and will continue to reward their directors with bonuses – like the 66 percent one handed to Jarvis boss Paris Moayedi after the Potters Bar accident.

NR could in fact be tugged in three directions: by rail businesses, government (especially its non-"strategic" strategic rail authority, the SRA) and bondholders. And chancellor Gordon Brown also expects it to produce efficiencies big enough to fill funding holes in the government's 10-year transport plan.

The limitations of NR have been tacitly acknowledged. Its job is managing maintenance, leaving infrastructure upgrades to special purpose vehicles (SPVs). These will be consortia of the usual private companies plus the SRA, which has hailed them as a panacea for nearly two years. So far the SRA has failed to find a way to graft a single SPV – yet more companies and interests – on to a rail network that's already a seething matrix of interfaces and conflicting aims.

Having seen how over-complication wrecks the railway and drives up costs, the government is now making it even more complicated. The single rail-infrastructure companies of countries like Germany and France are perfectly capable of building new railways *and* maintaining their networks, but they can't be replicated here as that would restore a link between public services and elected representatives.

'Dr B. Ching'

Number crunching

£40 million

What Eurostar pays each year to speed along 200 miles of new, state-owned 186mph line from the Channel tunnel to Paris

£40 million

What Eurostar pays each year to crawl along 70 miles of Victorian commuter lines from the Channel tunnel to London

DOWN ON THE FARM

SIR Brian Follett FRS did everything Tony Blair could have asked of him and more with his Royal Society inquiry into the handling of future foot and mouth epidemics. The most important thing was to look forward and not back at what actually happened in 2001, because this could only have concluded that scientific handling of the crisis was a total fiasco.

In particular it was vital that Sir Brian, as a visiting professor of Oxford University's zoological department, should not look at what happened when Professor Roy Anderson FRS, formerly of Oxford's zoological department, was put in charge of the scientific direction of the crisis on the recommendation of his friend Professor Sir John Krebs FRS of Oxford's zoological department. If he had done so, he might have had to point out that the mass-slaughter policy recommended by Prof Anderson's computer, resulting in the unnecessary killing of nine million healthy animals, was a scientific blunder of almost cosmic proportions.

But fortunately Sir Brian was able to concede this without having to spell it out, by recommending that any future FMD epidemic should be met not by mass-slaughter but by emergency vaccination. This has the added advantage that it is the policy which the European Commission has been making clear for well over a year would next time be compulsory in any case. So in recommending vaccination, Sir Brian and his team were in the happy position of being able to pretend they had come up with such a brilliant solution all themselves, knowing it had already been long since settled behind the scenes that this is what will happen anyway.

The other advantage of diverting everyone's attention from the past is that it avoids the unpleasantness of having to admit that even in 2001 the Blair government was in breach of the law by failing to use vaccination. Under EU directive 90/423, as confirmed by further instructions and guidelines from Brussels in 1993, 1995 and 1999, the epidemic which began in February 2001 met all the criteria under which a full-scale emergency vaccination programme should, by law, have been mandatory within days.

This was precisely what was urged at the time by all the world's top FMD experts, including Dr Simon Barteling, the Dutch vet who had been responsible for coordinating the EU's policy in 1990. But because the Maffia was hopelessly caught out in having failed to make any of the legally-required arrangements, and because the European Commission had itself failed in its duty to check that these were in place, London and Brussels conspired to hide the fact that the 2001 epidemic represented a massive system failure.

It was not of course Sir Brian Follett's job to rock the boat by pointing any of this out; nor that, had the law been obeyed, this might have saved the lives of nine million healthy animals and saved the British economy some £8bn.

But at least we can console ourselves that someone benefited from this mighty cock-up. In Cumbria alone, we now learn, the Scottish contractors Snowie, whose vast truck fleet worked overtime carting millions of sheep and cattle to the death pits, received £38.4m of taxpayers' money. Another contractor, Carillion, made £21m; Cumbria Waste Management £17.5m; while the vast Great Orton burial pit, grave to two million sheep and lambs, many still alive when they were bulldozed into the ground, cost taxpayers £35m. It is, as they say, an ill wind.

'Muckspreader'

TV

Vivaldi Unmasked (BBC1)

Art That Shook The World (BBC2)

HOW WHELDON and Lord Kenneth Clark will have been spinning rapidly in their graves last week as the new style of arts broadcasting was revealed.

Prefaced by one of those trails for the 2002 Proms featuring a "warm" Geordie accent banging on about "one perfect moment in time", **Vivaldi Unmasked** featured the cute-looking conductor Charles Hazlewood travelling by foot and gondola around Venice to tell the story of The Four Seasons, that Classic FM stand-by.

At every turn the programme testified to a terror of challenging the audience's minds. Dressed alternately in a little denim jacket and a leather one over an open-necked shirt, a wardrobe stressing that he's not one of those arty ponces, Hazlewood began the show in an elevator and then a supermarket, showing how the Four Seasons has become a soundtrack to our daily lives.

His script constantly sought metaphors comprehensible to the great unwashed. "If J.S. Bach was the Beatles of that era, Vivaldi was the Rolling Stones", he offered. But, even on its own patronising terms, this comparison was surely wrong. Vivaldi, if anything, was Elton John, a tunesmith too fluent and flamboyant for his own good.

Hazlewood also turned to pop to explain why Vivaldi's music had faded during his lifetime: "Like any pop star now, he found it hard to stay at the top of the charts. Harder! There was no Radio 1 pumping out his hits, no fan club..." And so on.

But the real honey came when the conductor tried to imagine what it must have been like when, in 1921, musicologists discovered a hoard of Vivaldi's lost work: "I think it must be a bit like your first kiss. You spend ages chatting with your mates about what it might be like and then..."

Most amazingly, the production was even scared of the word "orchestra". Hazlewood explained that he would now play Four Seasons with his "band". And, just in case Mr Middle England might not be responding to Hazlewood as a presenter, the cute blonde violinist Clio Gould now popped up as a sort of co-presenter.

Wearing masks while travelling by gondola, they discussed what kind of guy Vivaldi had been. "I wouldn't have pinned him down as a control-freak," Clio insisted. They then began to explain what was happening in the music of the Four Seasons: "Finally, the winds compete in battle big-time!"

The problem with this approach was that it skirted some of the more interesting readings – such as the theory that some of Vivaldi's compositions are patterned on female multiple-orgasm – and that it only works with a piece which is as programmatic as The Four Seasons.

Suggesting to a broader audience that classical music can be de-coded in this way – that bit's an insect, and listen here to the dog barking – is completely misleading and can only bring misery if they spread their listening further. It also shows no way ahead for arts programming. Is the BBC really only going to make films on onomatopoeiac pieces such as Flight Of The Bumble Bee?

Understanding this, Hazlewood smartly sabotaged the film by mentioning in an aside that the expository "sonnets" written by Vivaldi were rubbish and all that matters was the music. He was clearly personally much more interested in the intriguing theory that the code behind the work is that of the chronic asthmatic the composer was.

Most depressing throughout was the sense of the programme Hazlewood might have made if he'd been allowed the kind of interpretative freedom given to John Eliot Gardiner in his Beethoven film for the South Bank Show, Alan Bennett and Bamber Gascoigne in Granada's Man And Music in the 1980s or Howard Goodall in Channel 4's Big Bangs.

Those shows made musicology accessible without ever assuming the audience to be stupid. Trying to split the difference between Radio 3 and Radio 2 to create a sort of TV 2.5, the Vivaldi programme in fact came out nearer to a Radio 1.25.

Art That Shook The World also communicated the sense of a talented producer, Michael Waldman, struggling with a network's terror of broadcasting on the arts. Whereas Hazlewood is at least a handsome musical professional, this film had a handsome musical amateur, the failed Hague-successor Michael Portillo, expanding on his passion for the Ring.

As Portillo has modestly admitted in interviews, he's really no more than a keen CD-collector who has enough money to go to Bayreuth when he wants to. Ten years ago, a BBC film on Wagner would have been fronted by Simon Rattle but, while he would have brought to it brilliant musical insight, he wouldn't have won the publicity a notorious politician brings.

BBC rules on the use of political contributors required that Portillo frequently reminded the viewer of his background as a Tory MP, so it was never possible to forget that here was a presenter moonlighting on a leisure interest. The only good thing to be said for the film was that at least it wasn't David Mellor, making this the first time in Portillo's career that he has actually been preferred to one of his Tory contemporaries.

At least The Ring is a rather more heavyweight subject than The Four Seasons; but don't celebrate for too long. Guess what came next on Art That Shook The World? Moby Dick? Picasso? Tolstoy? Samuel Beckett? Er, no: the Beach Boys' album Pet Sounds, described by Mark Lamarr.

'View Finder'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: In Asian geography, Vietnam has borders with Laos, Cambodia and which other country?

Contestant: America.

AR: What was the last state to join the USA?

Contestant: Canada.

AR: What D is a large city in the Republic of Ireland?

Contestant: Belfast.

THORPE CRITICISES NEW TV DOCUMENTARY

MEDIA NEWS

EARLIER this month BBC chairman Gavyn Davies said that the board of governors should sack editors and producers whose lapses in standards cost the corporation money. "Firing the people is a much better remedy than fining the public."

What may prove to be the costliest lapse of all time was a report on BBC news last October falsely alleging a link between the Oryx diamond firm and Al-Qaeda. The BBC has admitted the report was untrue, and the only remaining question – to be decided in the high court next January – is whether it will have to pay the £10m damages claimed by Oryx. Whatever the outcome, the bill is unlikely to be below £5m. In the BBC's annual report, published last week, the governors cite the story as evidence of "high-profile difficulties in the factual area" and stress the need for programme-makers to "check material thoroughly".

So have they fired the man ultimately responsible for the fiasco, news chief Richard Sambrook? Er, no. The same annual report discloses that he has been awarded a bonus of £47,000, taking his total pay package for last year to a modest £260,000!

PS. The disastrous and untrue Oryx story emanated from MI6. Anxious to salvage something for the licence-payers, BBC lawyers are now suggesting to the intelligence service that it should pay half the damages when they are eventually decided. So far, oddly enough, MI6 seems reluctant to shell out.

BBC chairman Gavyn Davies was quick to defend the bonuses for the BBC's "top people". After all, said the multi-millionaire economics genius, they were in line with the organisation as a whole (where staff get a 3 percent pay rise next month).

Director-general Greg Dyke's bonus will in fact boost his £357,000 salary by 27 percent, while Mark Byford, director of World Service, will see his £211,000 salary swell by a monster 32 percent.

The biggest salary increase to date, however, rising by a whopping 1666%, belongs to Gavyn Davies himself following his promotion from vice-chairman (£6,000pa) to Chairman (£100,000).

WHEN Labour MP Derek Wyatt, a member of the Commons culture and media select committee, slagged off BBC director-general Greg Dyke over the big bonuses given to corporation bosses, it certainly caused ripples.

Someone at the BBC's One O'clock News managed to caption Wyatt as none other than "Gavyn Davies, chairman BBC board of governors."

ON The Record **and** ***Despatch Box*****, both "under review" – ie awaiting the chop – could be replaced by a new political programme aimed specifically at the under-45s, thanks to Greg Dyke's "new politics initiative" launched last year.**

But what exactly do they mean by new? We're promised "a mix of discussion and debate with politicians", which sounds depressingly familiar, and it will be "more Five Live than Radio 4". So, a combination of sport and phone-ins, then.

Five Live doesn't actually have any specific political programming. What *is* new is that two out of the three programme proposals under consideration are produced outside the BBC by independents.

"Mitch, why Errol?"

AFTER years of ridicule and abuse, Channel 5 is suddenly enjoying friendly press coverage following its conversion to "serious" programming such as ***Kings and Queens*****, a 12-part history of British sovereigns.**

Alas, the reviewers have been slightly less kind about Nigel Spivey, the denim-jacketed Cambridge don who introduces the kings and the queens. As Stephen Pile wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*: "'They are the great characters of the island,' said the presenter in a strangely expressionless manner… Is this really the level of history teaching at Cambridge?"

Er, perhaps not. No one seems to have noticed that although C5's cut-price rival to Starkey and Schama does indeed work at Cambridge university, he is actually a lecturer in classics who specialises in Greek and Etruscan art.

SKY NEWS

DESPITE telling an Irish audience recently that he had spent his whole life working against monopolies (*Eye* 1057), Rupert Murdoch seems determined to keep control of the broadcasting rights to the Republic's international football matches in the hands of one man. Er, himself.

At the beginning of this month the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) announced that it had signed a four-year agreement with Sky to cover European championship home internationals. As far as the two partners were concerned, it was a done deal. For good measure, Sky then told an already fuming Irish public that it had put in a 17 million euro bid for away matches too.

In Britain successive Conservative and Labour governments have blithely accepted Sky's unrivalled control of sport on TV. Irish politicians, however, seem slightly less willing to cooperate. Communications minister Dermot Ahern declared that the government would mount a fight "all the way to the courts" to keep football on terrestrial TV. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, was even more forthright: "The position for us is that we have a clear law in this country and a clear European Union directive. That means that the people of this country are entitled to watch major events free to air."

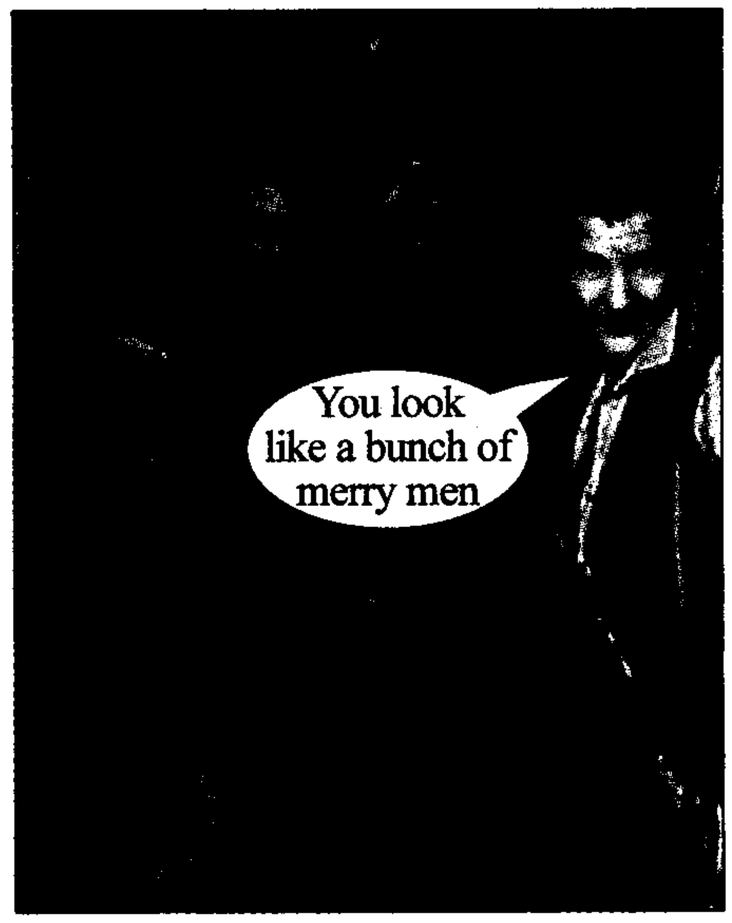
The directive he was referring to stems from the EU's 1997 "Television Without Frontiers" ruling designed to prevent faceless suits like the FA and the FAI from selling off their national game to the highest bidder – in most cases, Sky. The premier believes this could also be used to protect Ireland's away games against Italy and Germany – thus setting an important precedent across the EU which would infuriate the Digger.

Still, Ahern is not completely innocent here. His government had four years to clarify the law regarding what constituted "a major event". Many believe that its inertia in this period was prompted by a desire to keep the Digger onside in the run-up to a general election. (The Irish editions of both the *News of the Screws* and the *Sunday Times* backed Ahern's Fianna Fail at the last two elections.) *Eye* readers will recall that on the very day after his return to power six weeks ago, Ahern genuflected before Murdoch at the opening of a new printing plant in County Meath, hailing him as "one of the world's foremost leaders in media" and "one of the most outstanding Australian [*sic*] figures of modern times".

Following the huge public interest surrounding Ireland's progress in the World Cup, and with an another term in office now secured, Ahern has belatedly realised he has more to lose by letting most voters be deprived of the opportunity to watch their beloved Boys in Green than by incurring the wrath of Sky. But Murdoch – who, with the UK firmly shored up, was just beginning to fix his sights on the Republic – is unlikely to walk away quietly. As ever, this looks like a game where the biggest winner will be the legal fraternity.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Allan A-Dale Winton

AD NAUSEAM

IF McDonald's weren't one of the largest firms in the world whose entire raison d'etre is to homogenise the world's city centres and cuisine, you'd almost pity the company – the last few months have not been much fun for its marketing department.

Most recently, television ads in which a young boy played his divorced parents off against one another to get two visits to McDonald's attracted 102 complaints. Curiously, the Independent Television Commission chose not to reprimand the company, arguing that in this instance "the boy was shown to be coping well with his situation". Others might call it lying.

Speaking of lying, earlier this year McDonald's was forced to apologise to certain Hindu groups, after the vegetable oil in which they fry those delicious chips (sold as vegetarian products) was found to contain beef extract. McDonald's were forced to pay $10m for its little porky, and promised such "miscommunications" would be ironed out.

But if honest disclosure is one thing, a recent McDonald's marketing ploy in France may have been a little too candid. An "advertorial" is the trade name for those puff-piece promotions in magazines that masquerade as editorial but are bankrolled by advertisers. Recently, several French women's rags ran advertorials paid for by McDonald's, in which expert nutritionists offered dietary advice. Unfortunately, one of the nutritionists decided to warn against eating too much McDonald's, especially in the case of children. Presumably this includes children with divorced parents "coping well with the situation".

INTERESTING to see the new BBC ad for Radio 1, in which all of its top DJs scrap to earn their place behind the turntables.

The outcome of the battle is decided when hip-hop DJ Tim Westwood turns up with his fearsome crew. Because Westwood plays the more "street" brand of music and is 6' 4", he ends the advert as the victorious DJ.

Funny this, because back in March, as part of the World DJ Day celebrations, Westwood was asked to take part in a charity night at London club Fabric. In a bizarre parallel to the Radio 1 ad, each DJ was allowed to play just two records before the next took over. When the time came for Westwood to take to the decks, he could not even work the equipment. One of his crew had to help out. Neither could he switch from his first record to his second – somewhat fundamental for a DJ

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

KATE MOSS HAS BEEN SEEN LEAVING LUCIAN FREUD'S STUDIO:
THANKS KATE, I'VE REALLY CREATED SOMETHING WONDERFUL WITH YOU....
THANKS FOR LETTING ME USE YOU...
....AS A PAINTBRUSH

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

ALBY DAMNED

THE CAREER of Cllr Alby Tebbutt, the removals king of Romford, hit a rough patch shortly after Rotten Boroughs wrote about him in 1991. He received a four-month suspended jail sentence (later reduced to two) for beating up the chairman of a local residents association.

Alby had been Conservative vice-chairman of Havering council's planning and development committee when it served an enforcement notice on the local Wren removals firm for driving lorries in and out of a depot in a residential area at antisocial hours. Wren, a rival of Tebbutt's own Copsey removal business, was then bought for £500,000 by Alby himself – who allowed it to carry on making a racket in defiance of his own enforcement notice (*Eye* 769)! His conviction was the result of an over-enthusiastic attempt to persuade residents to lessen their opposition to his firm's noisy nocturnal activities.

Eye 784 commented: "The political career of… the ageing Essex wide-boy is now in tatters and he has been suspended from the Conservative group… Cynics suggest, however, that his antics make him a positive political asset in the pit-bull infested lowlands around the London-Essex border." It certainly does not seem to have done him much long-term harm. In the dark days of the early 1990s he had few public supporters. One of them was fellow Havering Tory councillor and Young Conservatives chairman Andrew Rossindell (*Eyes passim*), who won an ovation at the 1993 party conference when he called for "thugs" to be birched (except those thugs who happened to be his mates, presumably).

Fast forward a decade and Rossindell is Tory MP for Romford. He resigned his council seat after his 2001 election victory but keeps in touch by employing several Tory councillors on his staff. Alby Tebbutt is one of his staunchest supporters. And now things have come full circle for Alby. In recent years he had several controversial planning applications turned down by the Labour-controlled development control committee of Havering council. But now the council is once more back under Conservative control and the new chairman of the development control committee (renamed the regulatory services committee) is… Alby Tebbutt!

● SHEFFIELD residents have had a leaflet through their doors headed "Green 'n' clean", which extols the great job the city's Labour council and its French waste disposal "partner" Onyx (*Eyes passim*) are doing in expanding recycling schemes in the city. Printed in green ink on recycled paper, it's clearly intended to reassure environmentally-concerned citizens. Alas it fails to mention that Sheffield has one of the worst records in Britain for recycling domestic waste – about 5 percent – and its expansion plans will only bring it, if achieved, to the bare minimum demanded by the government. Onyx — part of the debt-ridden French conglomerate Vivendi — actually intends to burn most of the city's rubbish, much of it recyclable, in a £36m incinerator. Which, funnily enough, also fails to get a mention.

SLAVE LABOUR

LAST year the *Eye* wrote about how ethical considerations seem to go out of the window when councils become involved in public-private partnerships. Private construction companies involved in school refurbishment projects in the Glasgow area, for instance, were employing private security firms with clear links to violent criminal gangs (*Eye* 1039). "Nothing to do with us," said the councils involved when taxpayers protested.

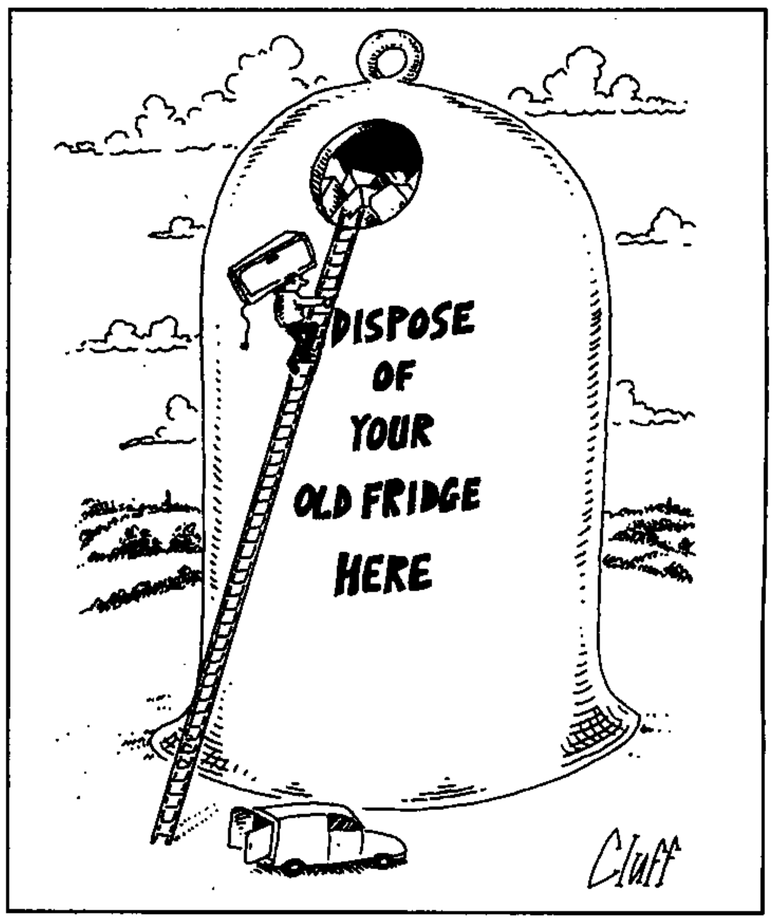
Now North Tyneside council is demonstrating a similar lack of interest in the background of the people it does business with. Its PFI "partner" in a £33.5m scheme to refurbish four rundown schools in Wallsend and Whitley Bay is Kajima (Europe) UK Ltd, a subsidiary of Japan's biggest construction company.

In November 2000 Kajima Construction grudgingly agreed a £3.2m out-of-court settlement with relatives and the few survivors of 986 Chinese labourers forced to work in a slave labour camp run by the company at Odate, northern Japan, during the Second World War. The deal came too late for the 418 workers who died from beatings, torture and malnutrition in 1944-45. The company did not apologise, merely saying that it was "grieved" about "unfortunate incidents which happened during wartime". And it stressed that the money, paid to a fund set up by the Chinese Red Cross, was *not* compensation.

Of course, the war was a long time ago. But only last month Japan's fair trade commission launched an investigation into whether Kajima and other big construction companies had conspired to fix artificially high prices on, er, local government contracts in Japan over the past decade. In 1997 Japan's former minister for construction was jailed for 18 months and fined 10 million yen (£55,000) for accepting a bribe for that amount from Kajima.

Kajima became North Tyneside's "preferred bidder" in April, before the council's Labour administration, led by Rita Stringfellow (*Eyes passim*), was knocked sideways by the election of Tory mayor Chris Morgan. We emailed Mr Morgan to ask whether he endorses Labour's decision, but as we went to press were still waiting for a reply.

● IT SEEMED a good idea at the time. Southwark council helped pay for an old bus to be equipped with computer equipment and to tour the borough, introducing deprived youth to the wonders of the internet. Inspector Knacker agreed to be in charge of the vehicle, to meet the kids and provide security. So it was doubly embarrassing when the bus – parked in a "secure" police yard – was broken into and the computers worth £35,000 were all nicked.



OUT OF THE BOX

TAXPAYERS in Newham, East London, wondering what the "new" Labour council is doing with all their money, should pop down to West Ham football club, where councillors have been trying out the executive corporate facilities which retail at around £25,000 a season.

The use of the exclusive box, which serves four-course meals with wine and liqueurs, is the latest piece of excess from newly elected mayor and £65,000-a-year council leader "Sir" Robin Wales. The purchase of the box comes hot on the heels of an announcement that the annual budget for councillors' pay in Newham has risen from £750,000 to £943,000. Sir Robin is chair of the association of local government, the bosses' organisation which is seeking to restrict council workers to a pathetic 3 percent wage rise – hence last week's one-day strike.

Meanwhile, to assist Sir Robin in his arduous duties, Newham is spending £155,000 staffing the "mayoral office" and paying £65,000 to Veredus, the executive recruitment arm of Crapita, to find suitable candidates. Stephanie Elsy, previously leader of Southwark council, is acting on a consultancy basis as "head of the mayoral office" on the equivalent to £58,000 a year until October.

A spokesperson for Newham council said: "We did have a corporate box on trial from January to May for a total cost of £14,579.20. It was used in the main by schoolkids, children in care and community representatives. Continuing use of the box will be discussed at a council cabinet meeting on 25 July."

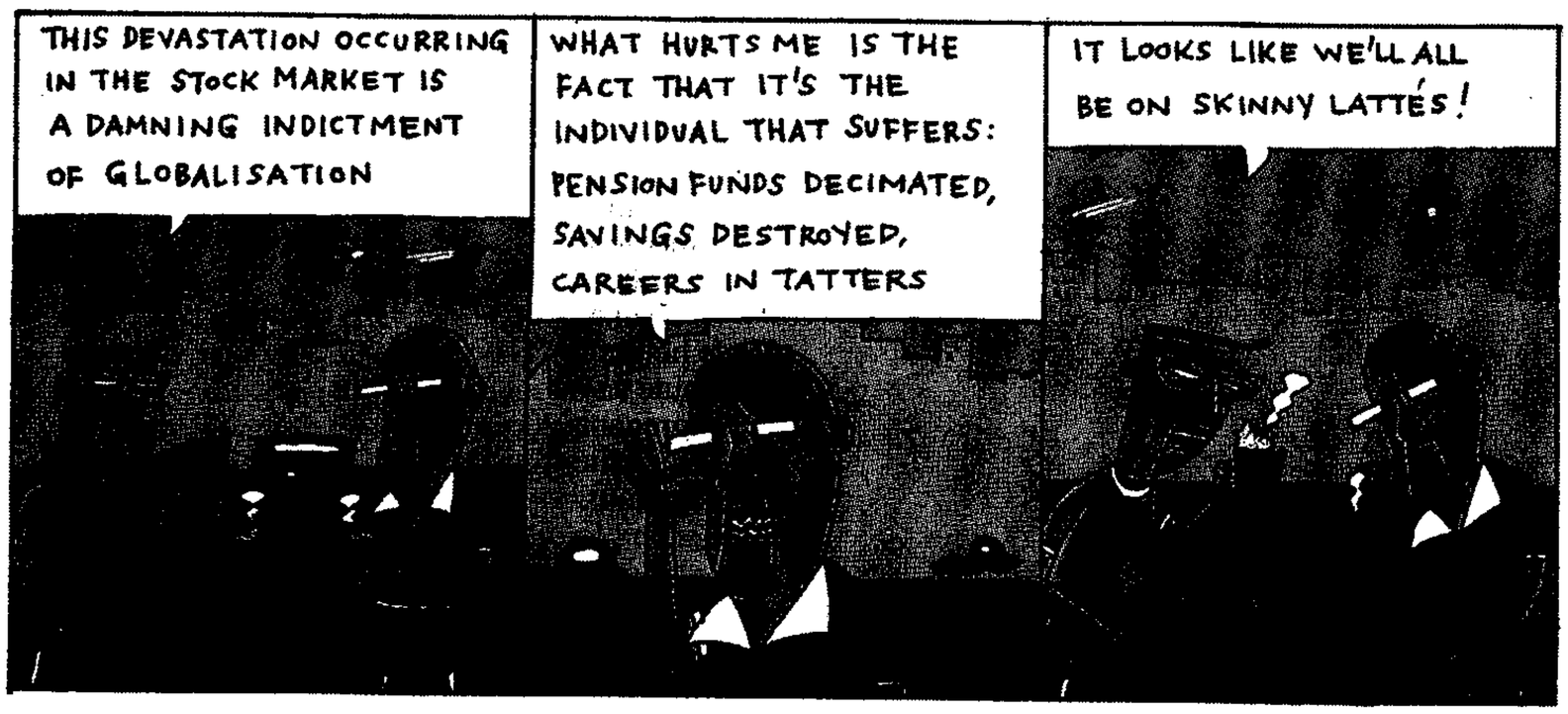
NOT SO FLY GUYS

THINGS must be desperate for Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, "Europe's largest computer consultancy firm", which has resorted to illegal flyposting to try to flog its wares.

In at least one London borough, council anti-litter teams have been busy ripping down the posters. According to CGEY, the decision to flypost in sarf London had been made by a PR agency, whose identity they wished to keep secret, because it had been identified as "a corridor where flyposting would be appropriate as part of an overall integrated marketing strategy". In other words: cheap and illegal.

Lambeth council now intends to bill CGEY for the cost of removing the posters, although no decision has yet been made on whether to prosecute. CGEY may be hard up — last month it announced it was sacking 5,500 employees worldwide and saw a 5 percent fall in its share price — but doubtless could stand the puny fine that such an offence would attract.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


THIS DEVASTATION OCCURRING IN THE STOCK MARKET IS A DAMNING INDICTMENT OF GLOBALISATION
WHAT HURTS ME IS THE FACT THAT IT'S THE INDIVIDUAL THAT SUFFERS: PENSION FUNDS DECIMATED, SAVINGS DESTROYED, CAREERS IN TATTERS
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'LL ALL BE ON SKINNY LATTES!

NOOKS and CORNERS

IT IS one of those curious, melancholy facts of life that while it is always difficult to find money for a good cause, or to repair an historic building (on which 17.5 percent VAT is payable), cash can always be found to do something unnecessary or to bugger something up.

My picture shows St Mary's Parish Church at Long Stratton in Norfolk as it will look when the Rev James Nash has improved it by building a new meeting room and kitchen in the churchyard. It is the sort of thing that has been added to churches all over the wealthier parts of England in recent years. Now nowhere is safe.

But spare a thought for the church. With its round tower of flint, it is one of the special churches for which Norfolk is embarrassingly famous – embarrassing because the county has too many medieval churches for its population and many have been abandoned, to be rescued by the admirable Norfolk Churches Trust.

"At the moment the church is used for lots of services, but nothing else really," complains Mr Nash, as if that's not what it was built for. But he is not content just to add his egregious new meeting room. "We want… to reorganise the interior, and are hoping to have the pews taken out and replaced with chairs."

If Mr Nash looks up Long Stratton in Pevsner's *Norfolk*, he will read that he is the custodian of some remarkable "Benches, many ends, many poppy-heads… Some may date from 1420, when money was left for benches." But to a modern clergyman, anxious to leave his mark in the struggle to drag the Church of England kicking and screaming into the 20th century, of what concern are the intentions of 15th century benefactors or the long-dead craftsmen who beautified this ancient hallowed building?

TOO OFTEN representatives of the increasingly sectarian and introverted CofE no longer seem to have any conception that a parish church and its churchyard might belong to everybody. Take the Hampshire village of Hordle, near Lymington, where villagers are angry about a proposal to build a smart new parish hall complex — costing a mere half million pounds — in the graveyard between the Victorian church of All Saints and the village school.

The vicar, the Rev Canon Michael G Anderson, and his parish church council came up with the brilliant wheeze of selling the old Memorial Hall for housing and using the money to build a new two-storey structure nearer the church. Built in 1947 at the expense of Capt and Mrs Rosoman in memory of their son, the existing hall is not a thing of beauty. But that is not the point; and many villagers think a new and better hall should be built on its site.

The point, as villagers complaining angrily, is that the vicar and his compliant PCC have not explained their proposals publicly and have declined all invitations to attend public meetings to discuss the matter. Hordle Objectors Action Committee is a force to be reckoned with, however: as its website announces, the aims are "the vigorous pursuit of every fair, democratic means of objection" and "not to detract from the good works of the church in the community". Now they have now forced the diocese of Winchester to hold a consistory court hearing into the whole affair.

As they rightly complain, though, gravestones have already been removed to make way for the new building and the vicar has removed the memorial plaque from the old hall and has virtually abandoned the building. So much for the church being at the centre of the community.

THE former Daily Express building or "Black Lubyanka" in London is one of the best creations of the 1930s. Inside Owen William's sheath of glass and vitrolite is a spectacular Art Deco entrance hall by Robert Atkinson — the model for the "Neo-Sassanian" interior for the Daily Beast in Evelyn Waugh's Scoop. It is rightly listed grade I.

After the newspapers abandoned Fleet Street, the building stood empty for some years. Now it has been adapted and carefully restored for Goldman Sachs, the American investment bank; and, for a while, passers-by could enjoy Atkinson's amazing entrance hall with its silver pendant vaults, Deco details and fantastic lighting seen through the glass.

But no more. Alarmed by recent anti-capitalist demonstrations, the Americans requested — and this is the scandal – received listed building consent to put up a grey security curtain across the foyer, blocking the view from the street. It is difficult to see how this will deter determined anarchists. But the gesture is a slap in the face for the public. So much for the openness of capitalism: the building really is the Black Lubyanka now.

'Piloti'

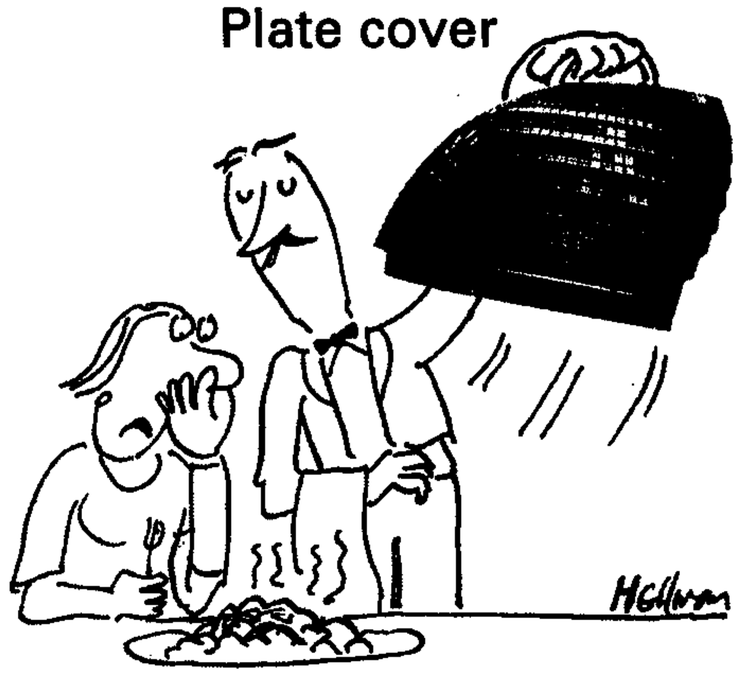
YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

It's not fair—everyone's slagging off Sebastian Horsley for being crucified in the Philippines.
Saying it was a publicity stunt because of the huge media interest it caused.
After all, he did it to save us all...
GUARDIAN ARTS
WHAT'S WRONG WITH BRITART?
BORING... DATED...

101 Uses for a City Hall

Plate cover



MUSIC & MUSICIANS

IN ALL the did-he-jump-or-was-he-pushed debate about the sudden departure of ENO's managing director Nicholas Payne, too little attention has been given to the role of Martin Smith in engineering the whole thing.

Smith is the quietly flamboyant bow-tied banker who, as chairman of the ENO board, made life so difficult for Payne that he had no choice but to leave. And as anyone with professional experience of Smith will testify, beneath the bow-tie and cultivated City charm beats a heart of ice and an aesthetic preference so utterly conservative it's hard to know how he got drawn into a boundary-breaking radical production house like ENO in the first place.

A swift survey of his other musical involvements says it all: chairman of the chic and well-connected period-performance band, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; chairman of the elegant, exquisite Wigmore Hall; and chairman of the pristine, super-civilised Bath Mozart Festival. Hardly surprising he didn't like the lavatorial *Masked Balls* and spivish, beer-can-swilling *Don Giovannis* Payne commissioned for the Coliseum.

That these shows were lousy isn't in dispute. But Payne's regime has generated fine work too. And his removal raises disturbing questions about the power the music world entrusts to a small group of people (usually bankers) who go about collecting chairmanships like postage stamps and impose their (usually settled and unpioneering) tastes across a vast swathe of the business. Martin Smith is evidently good with money. Maybe he is good with boards. But maybe ENO is a board too far.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

CHURCH NEWS

YET MORE tales of dysfunction in the cathedral close. This time the dean of Ripon, John Methuen, is at the centre of "calls to resign" following the departure of several senior staff and reports of "autocratic" behaviour.

A predictably botched private inquiry into the dean's "management style" commissioned by John Packer, the bishop of Ripon and Leeds, has only fuelled the flames. Now there is every prospect of a Lincoln-esque standoff between the bishop and a dean who refuses to resign.

Dean Methuen is no stranger to controversy. At the height of the Westminster Abbey organist dispute (*Eyes passim*), a group of senior congregants signed an open letter to dean Wesley Carr, challenging him to answer specific allegations about his behaviour. Methuen, with touching loyalty to a fellow dean but a rather tenuous grasp of the facts, wrote an emotional letter on Carr's behalf, warning the signatories to back off for "the sake of their eternal souls". Bishop Packer had better take care!

Letters

Younger and wiser

Sir

Mr Brian Daugherty is right (Letters, 12 July); A and AS level maths has become a joke. I wonder whether the current policy of ignoring 11 and 12 year olds is the reason.

The other day, teaching at a bog-standard comprehensive, I was telling a group of 17 year olds what a logarithm is when a little boy of 12 came into the room. He had been "excluded" from his class for unruly behaviour. He settled meekly to his assignment — filling in circles on a worksheet with red and blue biros. With the help of the board markers I gave him he was able to complete that task in less than a minute. For the rest of the class he listened quietly while I expounded principles which I learnt when I was 12 in the 1950s but which are now "Advanced Level".

PHILIP ROE,

Via email.

Level playing field?

Sir,

Unlike Dr Daugherty (Eye 1058) I would actively encourage the study of mathematics at university. It is (for many) a fascinating subject, which offers a variety of interesting, flexible and lucrative career options.

There is a real problem with AS level mathematics. While the questions themselves may not seem unduly hard, good students are struggling to make the jump in only two terms from the kind of mathematics done at GCSE, and the result is that many students are getting grades which are not a fair reflection of their mathematical ability and effort. Good potential mathematicians are being put off the subject, either because of their bad experience at AS level or because they can see that they will get better grades by choosing subjects other than maths.

At a recent open day I met four students who, loving mathematics, had embarked on AS level last autumn hoping to go on to study maths at university: all four are now intending to drop mathematics because the AS level has gone so badly.

Yours sincerely,
TONY MANN,

Head of Department, Mathematical Sciences, School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences, The University of Greenwich, London SE10.

Apparently – not

Sir,

The Apparently feature (Eye 1058) mis-spelt the name of Robert J van de Graaff, inventor of the eponymous generator, and in fact replicated the original spelling error made by the excellent, and sadly under-rated, 70s band Van Der Graaf Generator. Whatever would Robert have said?

Yours pedantically,
NICK DAVIES,

Swansea.

Sir,

Having a French fiancée, I object strongly to your "Apparently" cartoon (1058) which implies that all French women have hairy armpits. I find it sad that you should stoop to such childish racial stereotypes just to get a laugh, especially at a time when we are trying to promote closer ties with out European neighbours.

Besides, everyone knows it's Spanish girls who win the "Hairy Woman" contest hands down.

MATT O'DONNELL,

Dijon, France.

Selling Hitler

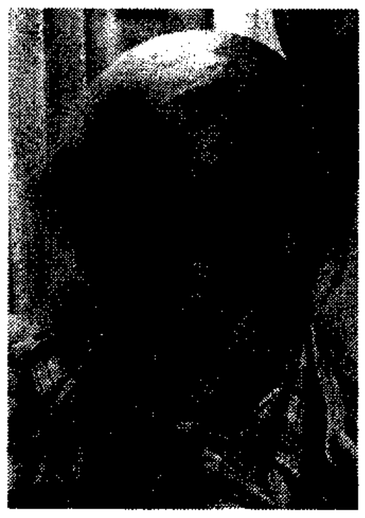
Sir,

Your response to my letter in the last issue simply adds more porky-pies to your previous, already substantial collection. Contrary to your claims, I have not signed a multi-book deal with Penguin, just a single contract for a single book. I did not "string Granta along" whilst committing myself to a deal with a rival publisher; on the contrary, I did not even approach another publisher until after I had told Granta I only wanted them to do one book of mine instead of four. I did not demand that they publish "the one book which Penguin refused to take"; I had not offered Penguin Telling Lies About Hitler as part of a (non-existent) multi-book deal at all. Granta's protestations are simply not credible. What really sticks in my gullet is the fact that they were telling me they would publish my book without the other three contracts being signed, when my agent had clearly been told that they wouldn't. They may claim their behaviour was unconnected with Irving's repeated threats to sue them if they published my book, but if you believe that, you'll believe anything.

Yours,
RICHARD J. EVANS,

Professor of Modern History, Cambridge University.

Lookalike



Johnson

Savile

Sir,

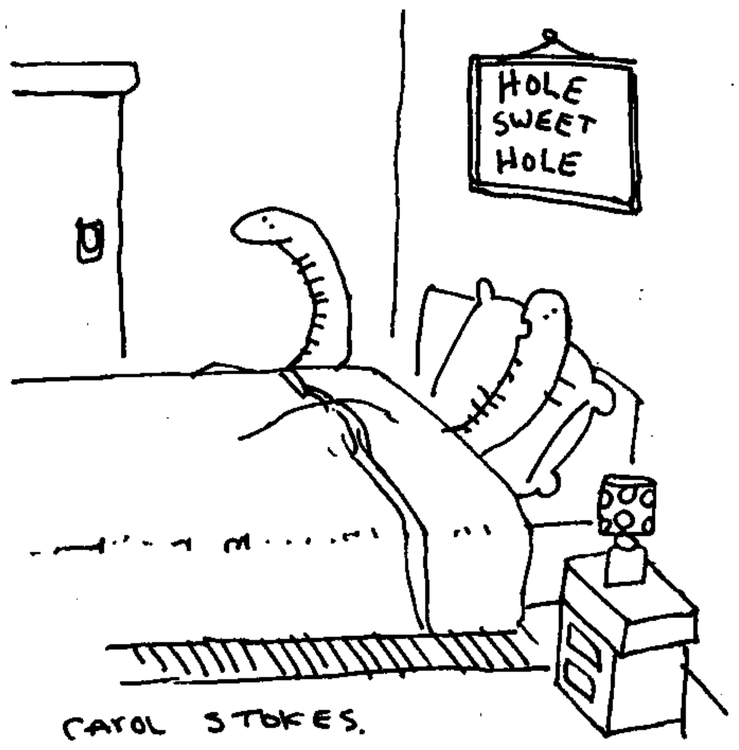
Has anyone else spotted the resemblance between right-wing icon Boris Johnson and noted philanthropist Sir Jimmy Savile OBE? Are they by any chance related?

Some time ago I drew your attention to the resemblance between Bore-us and the Emporer Nero, an observation you were kind enough to print.

As a fellow hack I have no axe to grind against the worthy Bore-us. I'm merely jealous of the fact that he resembles at least two celebrities, while I have no lookalike whatsoever among the great and good. Perhaps that's why he's famous.

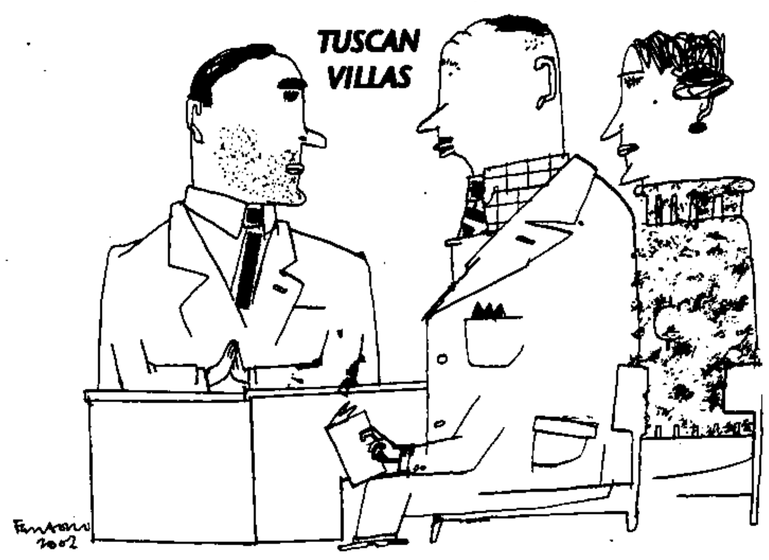
Yours sincerely,
WILLIE MORRISON,

Inverness.



"You know the old saying – 'The Late Worm Avoids The Bird'!"

Scenes You Seldom See (15)



"...and preferably somewhere close to lots of other British holidaymakers"

The Wallis collection

Sir,

If you really imagine there is anything in all this talk about Wallis being von Ribbentrop's mistress you are being a tad gullible.

When did this extraordinary event take place? Save for the odd flying visit Mr Champagne did not come to London as an ambassador until Wallis and Edward were a firm fixture. If MI5 could have come up with the shadow of a hint that he and Wallis had ever sported together, don't you think Baldwin would have used it to pry her and Edward apart?

As for the FBI files, have you ever seen the FBI dossiers on anyone for that period? They ramble, they are filled with all manner of irrelevant detail and every scrap of gossip imaginable, all served up with a kind of schoolboy innocence. Sure Mrs S was supposed to be a mistress of exotic eastern sexual techniques, picked up, if that is the word, while she was short of money in the Far East. But no one could ever come up with a shadow of evidence, not even the Shanghai police.

If someone really thinks they have a new story and new evidence I would hate to employ them as a food inspector in a street market; especially one that sold fish. True Mrs S, aka the D of W, rather liked a world in which Nazism was no threat and handsome men in fancy uniforms danced attendance on her.

As for Edward he could not see beyond the fact that his mother thought he had ratted on his family and his duty and that none of the family would recognise Wallis as a legitimate member of the royal family. Burning London and Coventry, dying seamen in patches of oil from torpedoed merchantmen, soldiers caught on the wire of Dieppe or dying by inches in Japanese camps, did not touch his heart or his imagination. That was fixated on his wife's presence at a Buckingham Palace garden party or at Royal Ascot. The fate of the world – not for Edward.

And since when has Private Eye trusted the FBI to get anything right?

DONALD WATT,

London.

Pub snub

Sir,

I, for one can assure Ken Wilson that I most certainly did not celebrate my 18th birthday at a boozer. It is my proud boast that I have never been so sad that I had to resort to a pub on any of my many birthdays.

I have been a loyal reader for 40-plus years, so you have won his challenge.
Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully,
ISOBEL LOCKHART,

Via email.

Master musician

Sir,

Your Music & Musicians correspondent rightly notes Malcolm Williamson's absence from the jubilee celebrations. The reason for this is fairly straightforward – a major stroke some four years ago has left him incapacitated and with impaired speech, although happily his mind is unaffected. The absence of a note of his music from the celebrations is certainly a shame, as he has written some great ones, but that's fashion for you, as well as the lack of a dynamic PR outfit, which his somewhat straitened circumstances do not presently allow. Sadly, the other claims are spurious. As Master of the Queen's Music, Williamson has written more than 20 laureate works, many of them major pieces, such as the Mass of Christ the King, at 90 minutes. This certainly compares extremely favourably with any previous Master. As to his habit of turning up to engagements "appearing" tired and emotional, although it cannot be denied that Malcolm has occasionally enjoyed the odd drink in his life, an earlier stroke around 20 years ago left him with slurred speech which, of course for those looking for it, will often be seen as a symptom of "fatigue". Likewise, his renowned fearlessness in speaking his mind has certainly resulted in one or two gaffes, among them many pearls, but to many of us these are to be welcomed as a refreshing antidote to the often stuck-up image that we in the classical industry are often saddled with.

Given Williamson's prodigious career – his vast body of work, his international performing career, the huge amount of time he spent educating and writing for the young, and the time and energy that he put into supporting worthy causes, it is not surprising that his health has eventually suffered. If the profession (who that?) has not found leadership in him, it has chosen not to look very hard. Concerts by the BBC concert orchestra and at the Wigmore Hall to celebrate Williamson's 70th birthday last November were popular and critical successes, and it is to be hoped that a revival of interest in his music will prompt recognition of one of the great 20th century composers.

Yours,
ANTONY GRAY,

London NW2.

Malcolm in the middle

Sir,

Lunchtime O'Boulez is right to point out the failings of the Master of the Queen's Music in this year of Brenda's golden jubilee (1057). It reminded me of the late Sir William Walton's comment to Malcolm Arnold (film score for The Bridge on the River Kwai, et al) back in 1975 that the "wrong" Malcolm had been appointed. It was a far-seeing view. Arnold's The Nation's Dances, specially put together for the Classical Prom at the Palace, captured the mood of the evening superbly and left one wondering why more official recognition has not come his way. He can produce the goods, unlike his namesake down under.

Yours faithfully,
JORY BENNETT.

Gloucester.

Pie in the sky

Sir,

The hula hoop and the frisbee were both manufactured and sold by Wham-O. And Spud Melin certainly worked for Wham-O at some time, so he may well have invented the hula hoop. However, the plastic frisbee was invented by Walter (Fred) Morrison and Warren Franscioni c.1946. As a matter of historical interest, the name frisbee is thought to have been derived from the Frisbie Pie Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut – Frisbie pie tins being particularly good as flying discs!

Just thought you'd like to know.

Yours faithfully,
LES BRYANT.

Northampton.

Destroyer of reputations

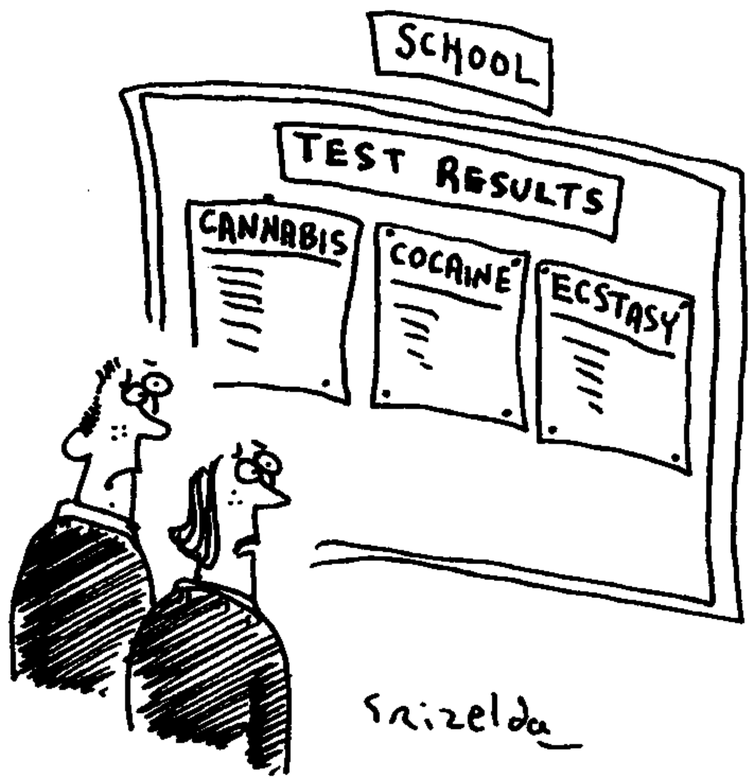
Sir,

In your latest publication you included an article about an alleged error by the "Channel 4 News picture desk". You suggested that in a report about the Royal Navy destroyer HMS Nottingham we erroneously broadcast footage of an aircraft carrier, and also that we are unable to tell the difference between the two. I am that Channel 4 news film researcher. I was responsible for providing the footage of HMS Nottingham, and I can assure you that the footage we broadcast was that of a Royal Navy destroyer. I can only presume your contributor can't tell the difference between a destroyer and an aircraft carrier, or perhaps between Channel 4 News and some less accurate news programme? However, the damage has been done. My professional reputation is in tatters. My colleagues shun me. My family go quiet when I enter the room and the flowers in my garden have ceased to grow.

I demand recompense at your earliest convenience.

Yours,
MATT KEENE,

C4 News.



Too little Choice

Sir,

Though I realise it's the Eye's job to be professionally churlish, can I suggest it is a little harsh to deride BBC Choice for having only a 0.57% audience share when the same article admits "less than 100,000 households have free-to-air digital TV"? In any case, as any fule kno, the size of one's audience is not necessarily indicative of quality (The Sun, circulation: 3.4 million; The Eye, circulation 0.2 million).

Yours,
JAMES BROWN,

By email.

KP nut

Sir,

You correctly reported me as very critical of the authors of the recent comparison of the Kaiser Permanante (KP) health care system with the NHS (Eye 1057, Kaiser Bill), but your latest report (of Kaiser CEO David Lawrence's lecture) was less accurate. He made no reference to the article other than to acknowledge it.

The major point he made was that health care systems cannot be exported and that while KP does have strengths these cannot just be copied. He was positive about the NHS, honest about the limitations of his system and mildly critical of a few of the more recent ideas floated by the department of health. It was a long way from being the sales pitch you describe; and indeed the NHS is not really likely to be able to afford the full KP service, despite what the British Medical Journal authors may say. In real money, rather than that used by health economists, it costs much more.

Your treatment of Don Berwick was most unfair and suggests you informant does not know very much. He is not a privatiser but appears to be a fan of the NHS and regards its attempts to improve as world class. In the USA he is much revered as a critic of the US health care system and a relentless and passionate advocate of investing in improving quality and safety for patients. Also you are two years late in reporting his appointment to the NHS modernisation board.

Also a quick look at the delegate list would have shown that the department of health and 10 Downing Street were in evidence and listening to the lecture would have revealed that David Lawrence had spent time with top people in both places already.

NIGEL EDWARDS,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

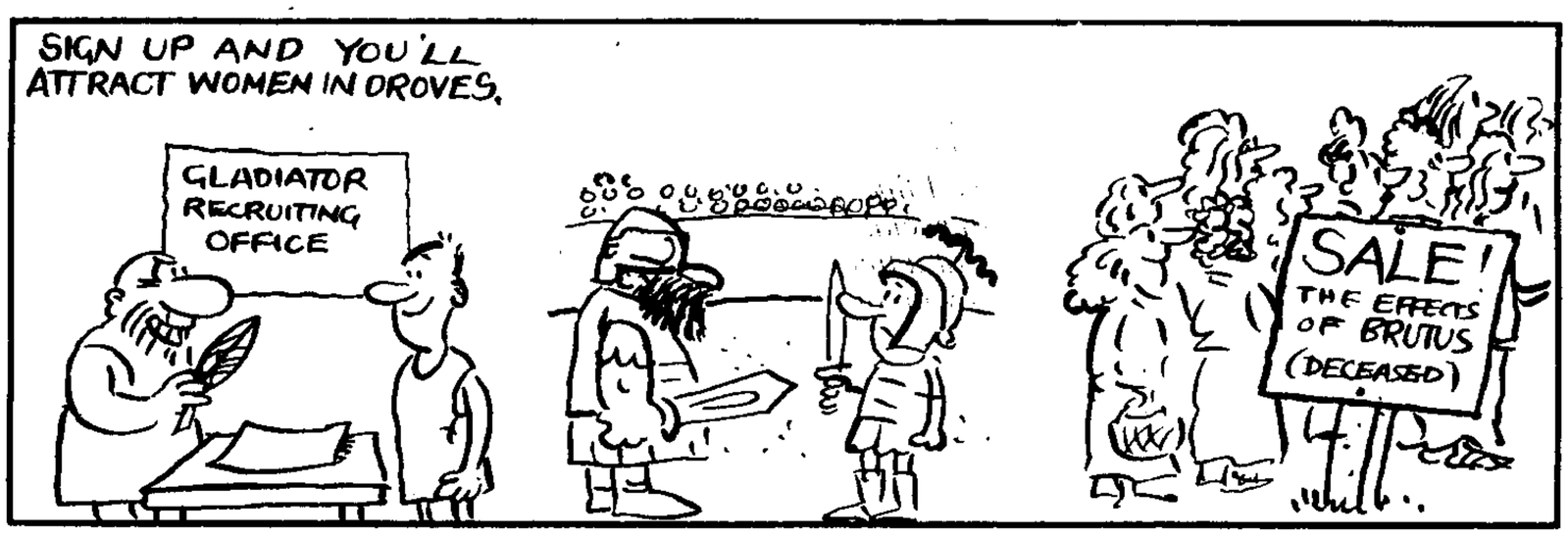
"James Joyce wrote Ulysses in Paris, as did Samuel Beckett."
EDNA O'BRIEN, Radio 4
(Steve Nicholas)

"You can say the decision was wrong, but I suspect if I'd been making the same decision then I would probably have made the same decision."
JOHN PRESCOTT, Radio 4
(Robert J. Newman)

"They thought they had a golden goose they wanted to fleece."
PETER PARCHER, BBC News website
(Paul Chambers)

"A lot of these riders literally exploding on the mountain..."
PAUL SHERWIN, Tour de France, ITV2
(Terry Joynson)

"He's taking the bull by the horns here, and throwing everything at it."
BOB WILLIS, Sky Sports
(Hannah Roberson)


HOM SAP
AUSTIN
SIGN UP AND YOU'LL ATTRACT WOMEN IN DROVES.
GLADIATOR RECRUITING OFFICE
SALE! THE EFFECTS OF BRUTUS (DECEASED)

Letter from **South Africa**

from Our Own Correspondent

THE unappetising parallels between our President Thabo Mbeki and your Tony Blair are increasingly commented upon here. As our former Marxist pushes his African National Congress further into the middle of the economic road, to avoid the consequent domestic problems he then spends as much time as he can abroad, grandstanding on the international stage as a "statesman". His own party critics now even call him Mblaireki.

Mblaireki spent a fortune in Durban last week hosting the launch of the African Union to replace the sclerotic Organisation of African Unity. As he can serve only one more term as our president, many at home suspect Mbeki wants a greater role as leader of a Euro-style African confederation.

Mbeki's government has gone ahead with a £4.3bn arms deal while poverty in some areas is worse than during apartheid and legions die untreated of Aids. But making us the regional superpower would undeniably further Mblaireki's ambitions. So it was most unfortunate that as he dazzled Africa's dictators in Durban, his own parliamentary defence committee was hearing evidence that more than half our 76,000 soldiers are medically unfit, with up to 60 percent of them HIV-positive.

Mbeki's undoing will be that – despite Blairite economics and promises to the west to "police" undemocratic African countries – there are still four words which will not pass his lips: yes, HIV causes Aids. Thus while the Durban shindig was in progress, Mbeki's shameful health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang was making a fool of herself (again) at the Barcelona Aids conference, blocking millions of dollars in foreign Aids funding and saying that anti-retrovirals would "poison" her people.

Diplomats, scientists and analysts have long agonised over what could possibly cause Mbeki's mad blind spot. The answer may lie back in Durban, two years ago, at the international Aids conference that preceded the recent Barcelona beano. Mbeki's then spokesman Parks Mankahlana was dying of Aids and, in his weakened state, probably let slip the truth. Parks (who expired shortly after) said the government didn't want to provide anti-retrovirals to pregnant women because of the costs of looking after so many orphans.

Could such crude ruthlessness possibly be true? As ever, *cherchez la femme* – in this case, the president's mother. Epainette Mbeki, herself no political slouch, recently told a small, unpublicised gathering that, yes, the cost of looking after all those orphans was indeed a powerful reason for not providing nevirapine to expectant mothers.

Or could the reason be even more cynical? For while denying HIV causes Aids, Mbeki has secretly continued to support two (white) doctors, a now feuding ex-husband and wife team, in their wacky search to produce a local "cure" called Virodene. In 1997, when he was Nelson Mandela's deputy, Mbeki arranged for a presentation to the cabinet. Alas, the main ingredient proved to be a toxic industrial solvent. This quack "cure", we now discover, has continued to receive hefty financial backing from businessmen close to the ANC and Mbeki, including, it has been claimed, the *Eye*'s old arms-dealing chum Wafic Said.

If Mblaireki could reveal himself the whiz who backed a "Third World" Aids cure, not only would he be acclaimed a visionary – but, almost certainly, president (for life) of the African Union.

The issue may no longer be black or white, but it's all about profits. Last year our biggest company, Anglo American, announced retrovirals would be available to any employee with Aids. It then realized this amounted to 20 percent of its 125,000 workforce, so four months later Anglo retracted, saying only senior staff would be eligible as "provision of drug treatment for lower income employees was too expensive".

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

o "Our message is simple – only a fool would drive and wai," a spokesman for Thailand's traffic police told a press conference in Bangkok. "According to our surveys, the most dangerous thing a motorist can possibly do while driving is to pay respect to a holy shrine by performing a wai as they pass by. It's become the biggest single cause of traffic accidents in Thailand, even greater than excessive alcohol consumption or using a mobile phone.

"The risk of accidents increases drastically when a driver puts his or her hands together to perform a wai, as a gesture of respect while driving past a holy shrine or spirit house. Taking the hands off the steering wheel at any speed can be disastrous, but many drivers do not slow down at all, and it can take up to thirty seconds to perform an elaborate wai, by which time they may have travelled more than half a kilometre. So we are asking all motorists to remember that, next time they drive past a holy shrine, they should try to convey their respect mentally, not physically, and avoid using any hand signals. The good spirits will surely appreciate this gesture, and other motorists and pedestrians will surely appreciate not being run over and becoming a spirit themselves. I am convinced this is a major contribution to road safety." *(The Nation [Thailand], 17/6/02. Spotter: Nick McGeachin)*

— o —

o *"Sir, When I was a young boy, whenever I had an injury of any kind, I would rush to my father to seek his attention for first aid. He would examine the fresh wound, and he would then give the command 'boy – go and urinate on it.' I would do just as he ordered, and the wounds always healed, usually in a matter of just a few weeks.*

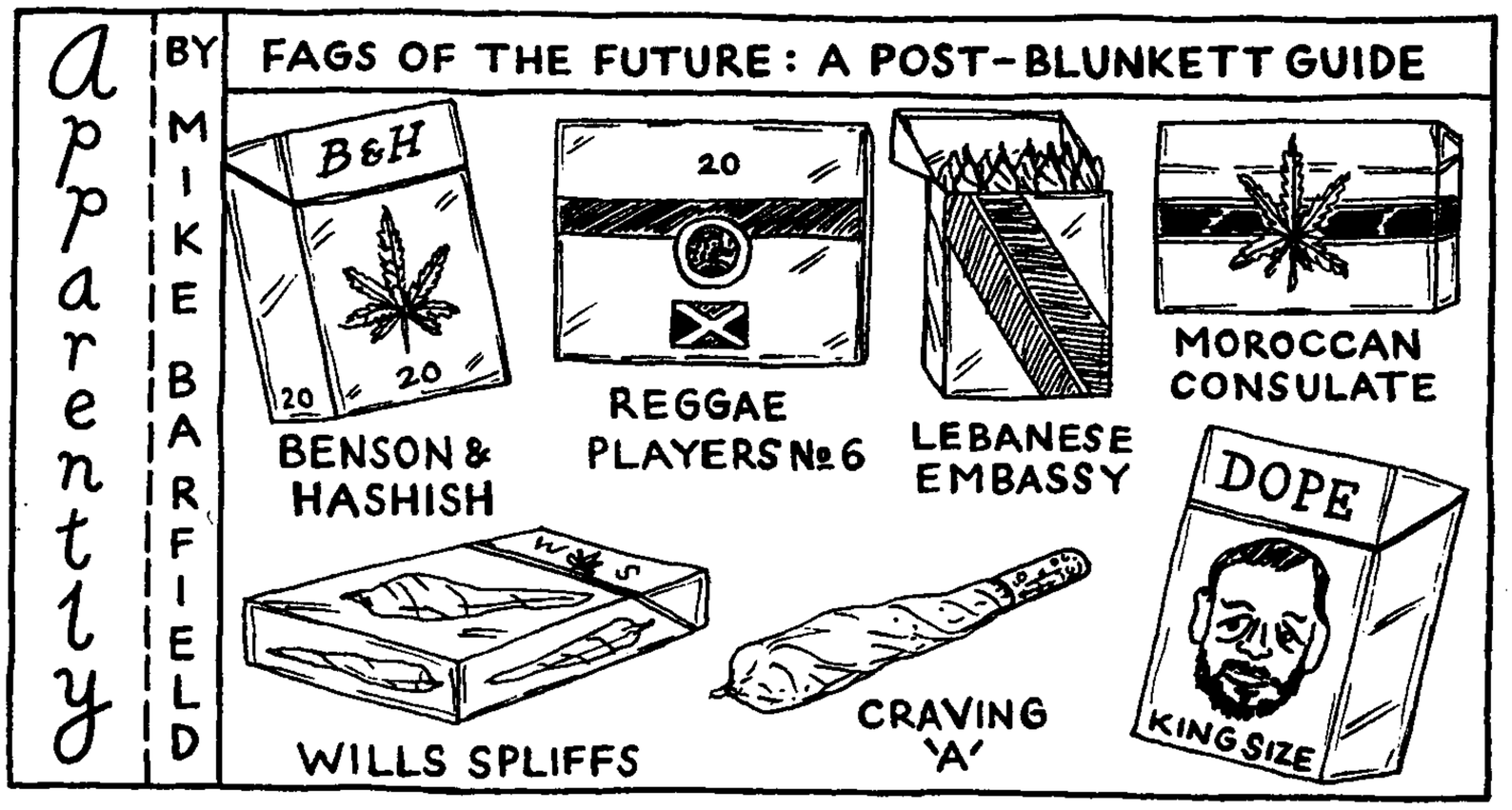
"I have used urine to treat all my wounds ever since, and I always keep a gallon jar of my own urine stored in my refrigerator for emergencies. I soak cotton wool or toilet paper with urine, and squeeze the urine into the wound. Then I drink a small glass of urine too, so that the healing properties are working from within, as well as from without. I wash my hair and face in urine. I soak my nails in urine. I use urine in so many different ways, at least three or more times a day, and magic results always occur. Yours sincerely, Tony Opoku, Accra." (Daily Graphic [Ghana], 12/6/02. Spotter: Alan Burnett)

— o —

o "This is one of the most frightening examples of bureaucratic ineptitude and backward logic that I have ever seen," chairman George P. Radanovich told the Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands in Washington D.C. "To suggest that dumping toxic sludge into the Potomac River is good for fish, simply because it prevents them being caught by man, is like suggesting that it's good for baby seals to be clubbed, because it prevents them from being eaten by sharks. It's ludicrous."

Californian Republican Radanovich was responding to an internal Environmental Protection Agency document, which claimed

that toxic sludge is good for fish. "It is not a ridiculous hypothesis," the document stated, "to suggest that dumping toxic sludge into the Potomac River actually protects the fish, and is beneficial for them. Our studies suggest that the sludge affects the behaviour of the fish, making them lethargic, and less likely to bite on fishermen's lines. So instead of being caught and eaten by humans, they gradually move upstream, and those that survive can lay eggs. That is why we are recommending that the dumping of toxic sludge into this designated American Heritage River should continue." *(The Daily Yomiuri, 20/6/02. Spotter: Peter Hibbert)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

And thanks to all those "parish leaders" who set up our wonderfully successful 'Meet The Vicar' question-time session in the Church Hall last week.

It's all part of what I call "Doing Things Differently", and reaching out to the parish in ways which none of my predecessors would ever have dreamed of!

For those of you who haven't yet accessed the vicarage website (www.tonygreat.spinvic.uk), let me just tell you that it was a triumph!

It was probably the most constructive couple of hours that any of us in the church hall that afternoon have ever spent!

There was no cheap point-scoring! No attempt to catch me out, or make the Vicar look stupid (apart, of course, from Mrs Dunwoody, who very rudely asked me why I had given a job to my friend Mr Birt – honestly, talk about wasting everybody's time!).

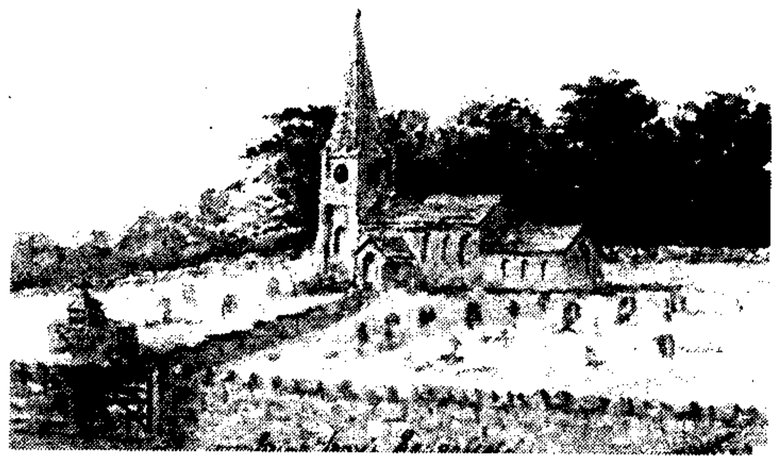
In fact, now I think about it, I am not sure it was entirely wise to allow Mrs Dunwoody to attend the meeting in the first place, since we all know that her morbid obsession with trains has made her something of a laughing stock around the parish!

And Mrs Dunwoody was not the only one who, frankly, wasted everyone's time with questions that were not at all relevant or helpful!

Someone – I think it was Mr Mullin – even asked me why I was so keen to support our good friend the Rev. Dubya Bush of the Church of the Latter Day Morons.

I told Mr Mullin that we should all be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Rev. Dubya in his great crusade against Satan Hussein.

As Rev. Dubya himself has put it so



memorably, "Go forth and kick Satan's ass, before he kicketh yours" *(Book of the Prophet Enron, Ch. 10).*

But apart from these rather silly interventions by people who clearly had not understood the spirit of the occasion, everyone else was agreed that it was a very useful and constructive event, which gave key opinion-formers in the parish a chance to really touch base with where the Vicar's coming from, on a whole raft of core issues which impact on the targeting and delivery of a joined-up parish agenda for the way ahead in a very real sense.

Yours,

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers (Again)

●Mr Michael Foot, who is now very old and is clearly suffering from senile dementia. He has recently been going around the parish badmouthing the vicar and accusing him of being dictatorial. Let us pray that he will remember his own failings in the past and get over his bitterness at never becoming Vicar, recalling the fact that he very nearly burned the church down by being so useless! May Mr Foot make a swift recovery from his present mental condition, or, if this is not possible, may he have a merciful release and die with dignity as soon as possible. T.B.

Women's Groups

Mrs Cherie Booth QC gave a very interesting talk on "Britain's overcrowded prisons". Too many people, she said, are being sent to prison these days, which means that there is often no room for the real culprits in our society, such as snoopy journalists and prying photographers! At question time, Mr Blunkett disrupted the proceedings by disagreeing with the speaker (perhaps not realising that she is the Vicar's wife!) and saying that in his view a lot more people should be put in prison! Mrs Morris proposed a vote of thanks and apologised for what she called the "bog standard" quality of the cakes that were served with coffee after the talk. A.C.

CHERIE IS AN OIL PAINTING!

I'm sure you're all as thrilled as I am with the new portrait of Cherie which will replace the boring old Madonna and Child in the church porch.

The picture was painted by 11-year-old Bobby Hughes, who is studying for his GCSE Art. This is very good for your first attempt, Bobby!

There will be devotional candles underneath the portrait for anyone who wishes to light one at the very reasonable cost of £30 per candle (matches extra). All proceeds to the PCC Fighting Fund, c/o The Administrator.

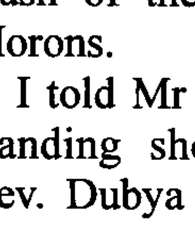
PARISH TREASURER'S REPORT

Our thanks to Mr Brown for once again coming up with his annual statement of our parish spending plans. And I am sure many of our parish organisations will be very pleased with the various generous donations he is proposing to make to them. But let's get one thing straight, shall we? When people have talked about how "generous" Mr Brown is being in "giving away" all this money, we should remember that this is not Mr Brown's money. It's mine! T.B.

Advertisement

"Handy Mandy"

Still available for well-paid part-time work.
Anything considered, especially ambassadorships, EU Commissionerships, etc.



Says Mandy, "I'm a fighter, not a quitter," (except when I have to quit the job in disgrace).

Ring Mandy today on 0209-462-123
(or leave message with Renaldo)

Announcements

Those of you who make regular donations will have noticed on your envelopes that we now ask for £24 per annum per person. This is what comes of parishioners complaining about our wealthy patrons such as Mr Robinson, Mr Ecclestone, Mr Hinduja and not forgetting Mr Desmond of the Adult Magazine Emporium in the alley behind the chip shop *(ring and ask for Mr Haslum).* T.B.

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, JULY 26, 2002

FOOTSIE IN FREEFALL AS STRIKES CRIPPLE COUNTRY AND AIR CHAOS AWAITS HOLIDAYMAKERS

'Why not pack it all in?'

by Daily Mail Staff
Clare Monger

MIDDLE-CLASS newspaper readers are losing the will to live, according to reports published every day in the Daily Mail.

According to experts on the Mail, readers are all bankrupt and if they try and go to work, they will be murdered by left-wing council workers on strike.

Alternatively, if they attempt to leave the country, they will either die of starvation at a crowded airport or be killed horribly in a multiple aircraft pile-up when air traffic controllers take industrial *(cont. p. 94)*

Daily Mail COMMENT

Father Christmas – It Won't Work

Gordon Brown

THE pathetic attempt by Father Christmas to make everyone feel better off by giving them presents is doomed to failure. The spectacle of Santa Claus gaily handing out packages to all and sundry only serves to underline the fact that this giveaway is too little and too late. And it's also too much.

Let's face it, the record shows that in the longterm these hand-outs are nothing but a waste of money. They do not help the recipients and are inevitably misused and abused by the very people they are supposed to help.

Our message to "Red" Santa is simple. It would be much better to save all your presents and put them back in your sack so that we at the Mail can carry on complaining about how mean you are and how you are sitting on a gift-mountain.

© *The Daily Mail.*

Nigel Dumpster

My marriage to Duke's Daughter Has 'Broken Down'

■ I can reveal exclusively to readers of the Daily Mail that the marriage of top diary columnist, myself, 76, to Lady Camilla Dumpster, the third daughter of the 32nd Duke of Leeds and fourteenth cousin twice removed of her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, has, sadly, irretrievably collapsed.

Close friends tell me that I am living apart from my wife, and that divorce proceedings are under way.

Sources close to myself have also revealed that I am being comforted by a young, nubile companion (surely "bottle of whisky"?) and that I am to be seen more and more frequently in the seedy environs of Chelsea, accompanied by my latest squeeze, who it seems has never had the good fortune to meet top billionaire Robert Sangster, 94.

Sad Times For Me

■ These marital difficulties come at a bad time for Sherborne-educated myself, as they coincide with my imminent court appearance at the celebrated magistrates court in London's fashionable Bow Street, where I am to face charges of so-called drunken driving.

In doing so, I will join a long and distinguished list of aristocrats and members of the Royal Family who have stood in the dock on motoring charges.

These include the Princess Royal, the Marquess of Blandford, who is heir to the 21st Duke of Marlborough, the late Marquess of Bristol and the Hon. Jacaranda Templeton-Twytte, 2nd cousin to the disgraced diarist and socialite, previously married to the 14th daughter of the 83rd Duke of Norfolk, myself.

Diarist Washed Up

■ Whatever has happened to myself, friends close to me were asking last night. Said one, "It's sad about Nigel. He's become the sort of figure he used to write about.

"No wonder the Mail is having to take on new recruits from other down-market rags in a desperate attempt to find some stories."

Myself is 74.

What Does This Picture In The Daily Mail Tell Us About Christina Odone?

by **Nancy Del'Olio** and **Sven Goran Eriksson**

IT IS clear from her body language that this woman is trying too hard to get a lot of money from the Mail.

She is obviously attempting to please Paul Dacre by writing a load of half-baked psychological drivel about people she doesn't know. But it won't work. It will all end in tears.

© Lunchtime O'Done, Mail Trash plc.

Business News

IS LABCON BUST?

by Our City Staff **Arthur Andersen**

THE HUGE media company Labcon, which has offices all over Britain, is bankrupt, according to its latest accounts.

With its charismatic leader Tony Blair, Labcon built up an enormous following and persuaded millions to invest their savings in Blair's vision of a technological future.

Labcon was also backed by influential business leaders such as Bernie Ecclestone, the Formula One supremo, Gotricha Hinduja, the arms-to-passport magnate, and Sir Dirtswell Desmond, the filthy pornographer.

All of them were attracted by Blair's promises of a cash-rich bonanza to be shared by rich and poor alike. The shirt-sleeved Blair with his winning smile became a cult figure in the late 90s. But the news that Labcon is £6 million in debt has revealed the whole edifice as nothing but a chimera built on a heady cocktail of lies, falsehood and empty promises.

Today, only the Dome remains, rusting and boarded up, a tragic symbol of a *(That's enough. Ed.)*

YES! IT'S BIG BROTHERS

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD
HOW'S THE PRE-SEASON TRAINING GOING?
OH OK, AT THE MOMENT WE'RE WORKING OUT OUR TACTICS...
I'D WAIT A WHILE BEFORE YOU GET ANOTHER HOUSE, IT'S A BAD TIME TO BUY...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO GET ANOTHER SPORTS CAR, BUY A CLASSIC, THEY DON'T DEVALUE...
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
SHARES ARE A NO-NO:.. THE MARKETS DEAD..

THAT NEWSNIGHT INTERVIEW YOU DIDN'T SEE

(Charles Kennedy talks to Jeremy Paxman)

Kennedy: So, Jeremy, glad to see you've sobered up enough to come on the show.

Paxman: I'm sorry...

Kennedy: I thought you might be lying on your own somewhere, unable to stand up...

Paxman: No, I...

Kennedy: So why aren't you married? Are you a poof?

Paxman: No, I'm not...

Kennedy: Alright then, it must be because you like a string of totty, don't you?

Paxman: No, no...

Kennedy: I've seen you ogling the female students on University Challenge. I bet that's not all you get up to! Whoar! Eh?!

Paxman: Really, I think I should...

Kennedy: So, how many bottles of whisky a day do you drink with these blonde bimbos? One, two... ten?

Paxman: And now a look at tomorrow's papers. They all seem to lead on this interview *(cont. p. 94)*

Head of Chef
Required 12K p.a.
Chinese Take-Away in Kent
Advertisement, Kent & Sussex Courier

COUGH: NO EASY MEDICINE

by Our Political Staff Peter O'Bore

IAIN DUNCAN COUGH, leader of the Conservative Party, last night refused to comment on Gordon Brown's spending review.

Friends of Mr Cough explained that the Tory leader hoped to discredit Mr Brown by saying nothing about the huge increases in public spending.

Said the friend, "It would be all too easy for Iain to come out and attack Mr Brown for being reckless and profligate. But how much cleverer it is to keep very quiet until everyone realises what a mess Mr Blair's government is making of everything."

A Liberal Democrat spokesman meanwhile attacked Mr Duncan Cough for stealing his party's policies.

"It was Charles Kennedy who first thought of the idea that a party leader should say nothing about anything, and the Tories have just copied it."

BLUNKETT TO ABOLISH LEGAL SYSTEM

by Our Legal Correspondent **Joshua Rosenbeard**

THE Home Secretary David Blunkett is planning the most radical reform of Britain's legal system since the Middle Ages by abolishing the age-old concept of 'the rule of law'.

"In a modern Britain," Mr Blunkett told MPs yesterday, "we don't need all the airy-fairy stuff about courts and juries and out-dated notions such as 'innocence'."

Security Blunkett

"It is ludicrous," said the Home Secretary, "that in the 21st century the police cannot just put people in prison when they are obviously guilty.

"Take the Stephen Lawrence case for example. OK, the police made a tremendous mess of it the first time round. But under my new system they will be given a second chance to mess it up again."

Britain's policemen last night welcomed Mr Blunkett's proposals.

Said Superintendent Knacker, spokesman for the Police Federation, "The idea of replacing the jury with twelve policemen is one we have been campaigning for for years. We are confident it will quickly lead to a massive increase in convictions, particularly if Mr Blunkett also agrees to replace judges with senior police officers."

Radio Highlights

WHAT YOU MISSED

The Today Programme

Ed Stourton *(for it is he)*: And now, live from Madrid, we have Her Excellency Donna Anna della Paella, the Foreign Minister of Spain. Donna Anna, your country has just invaded Parsley Island, on the grounds that it belongs to Spain even though it is right next to Morocco. Why is this different from the situation over Gibraltar?

Paella: What a ridiculous question. The two situations could not be more different. Spain has a historic right to Parsley Island because its inhabitants all voted...

Stourton: ...don't you mean "goated"?

Paella: Please be quiet when I am talking. All of the goats on Parsley Island wish to be Spanish. And we have a sacred duty to protect their rights.

Stourton: Is this what we call the "Nanny State"?

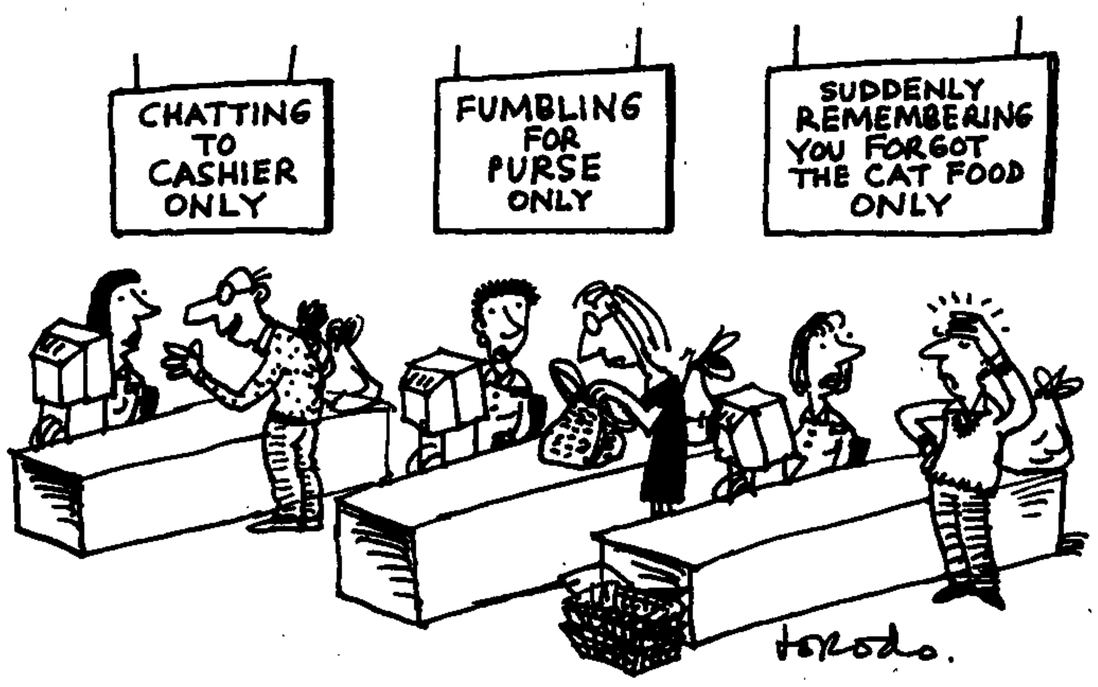
Paella: You shuddupya face.

Stourton: But if these goats want to be Spanish, as you say, surely the people of Gibraltar want to be British?

Paella: No. This only shows you know nothing about history. The wishes of the people of Spain are quite clear on this issue. They want to have Gibraltar and they want to have the Isla Parsleya. This is what we call democracy, Mr Stourton. Perhaps it is time that you English began to learn what the word means.

Stourton: Thank you, Your Highness. And now, Thought For The Day, with the Chief Scientologist, Mr N. Ron Hubbard Jr.

Hubbard: When I was living on the Planet Bargon 300 million years ago, the thought struck me that *(Cont. 94kHz)*



No. 94 The Signing of Magna Carta

In the summer of 2002 AD, in a historic ceremony at the Field of Runnyscared, King Blunkett I, accompanied by his faithful dog Griswold, received in audience the most powerful barons of the kingdom – the Baron Black, the Baron Desmond the Dirty and the Baron Rothermere, accompanied by his trusty squire Dacre.

The Lords of Middle England set out their demands, that all the villeins and miscreants should be strung up, for, quoth they, "Such be the onlie tongue they comprehendeth."

And King Blunkett agreed to their every demand, right down to their insistence on the instant banishment of the poor asylum-seekers who had come to Britain's shores seeking social security and free council housing. Such was his fear of the all-powerful barons.

Extract from The Simon Schama "History of Britain Experience".

The Times

And Universal Register

1 penny

Ratings For Big Bedlam Soar

Ye most popular entertainment of ye moment in ye Metropolis is ye Big Bedlam Showe, presented by the celebrated showmen Mr Julian Bellamy and Mr Peter Bazalgette.

Each night vast queues form of excited gentlefolke, anxious to witnesse with their own eyes ye sad anticks of ye unfortunate and mentally disturbed wretches who dwell within ye house of Bedlam.

Ye poore inmates strip themselves naked, shriek with laughter and shout profanities at each other all ye nighte long.

On some nights, it hath been whispered abroade, the lunaticks even perform lewde acts with each other, much to ye entertainement of ye ladies and gentlemen viewing from ye safety of ye balconies.

Foremost among ye curiosities on display is ye now

celebrated Mistress Jade, an uncomely wench of limited mental powers, who hath been dubbed by ye hackes of Grubbe Street, namely Masters Yelland and Moron, as "Ye Pigge".

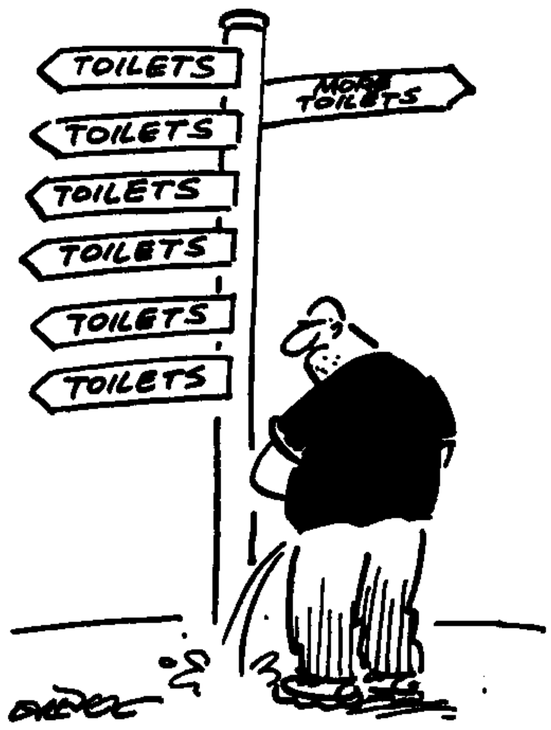
The hope of these bloodthirstie hackes is that the populace will rise up and murder Mistress Jade, thus adding greatlie to ye publick stocke of harmless pleasure.

Ye Stoppe Presse

Hundreds forced to walk to worke in Capital as ye sedan men "down chairs" in 24-hour strike **2**

His Majestie King George III is pleased to announce his bestowal of a knighthood on Dr Jonathan, ye celebrated savant **7**

Funny cartoon by Hogarth **94**



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Karsh of Ottawa, photographer of the famous

So. Farewell then
Karsh of Ottawa.

Karsh. A strange name.
Was it your first name?
Or your second?

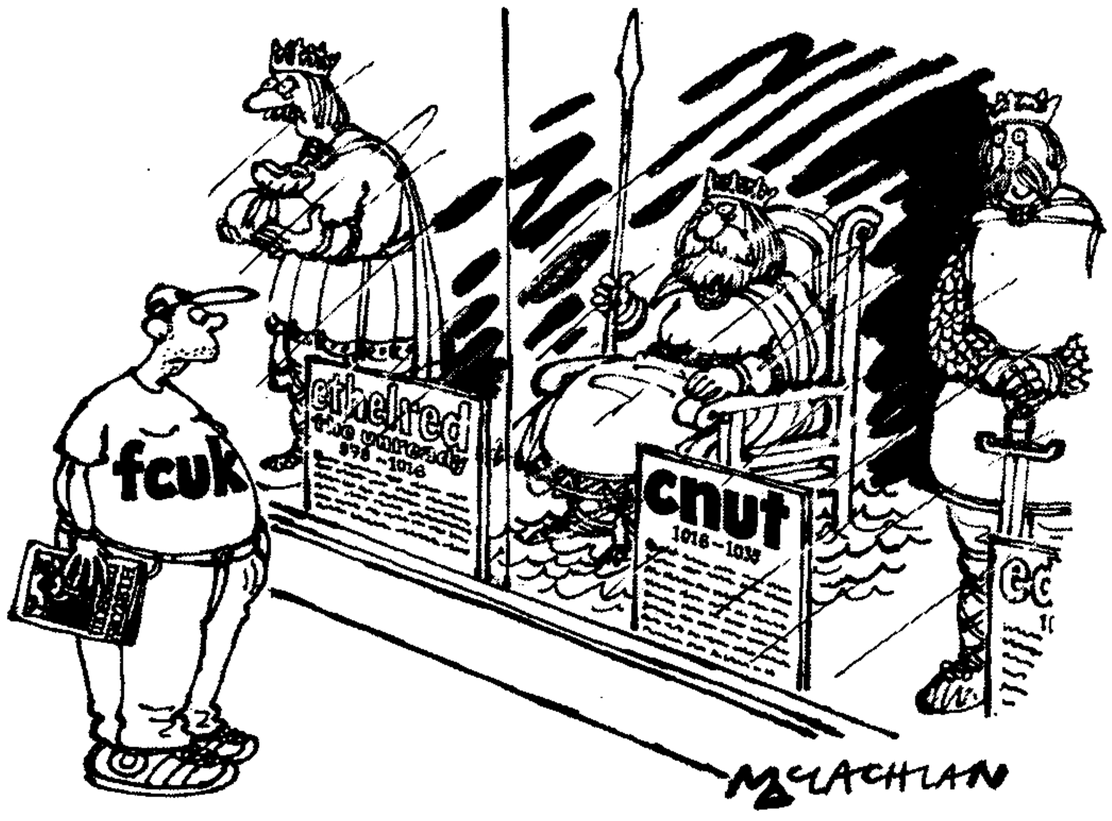
Were you perhaps
Lord Karsh of Ottawa,
Like your fellow Canadian
Lord Black
Of Coldharbour?

I doubt it.

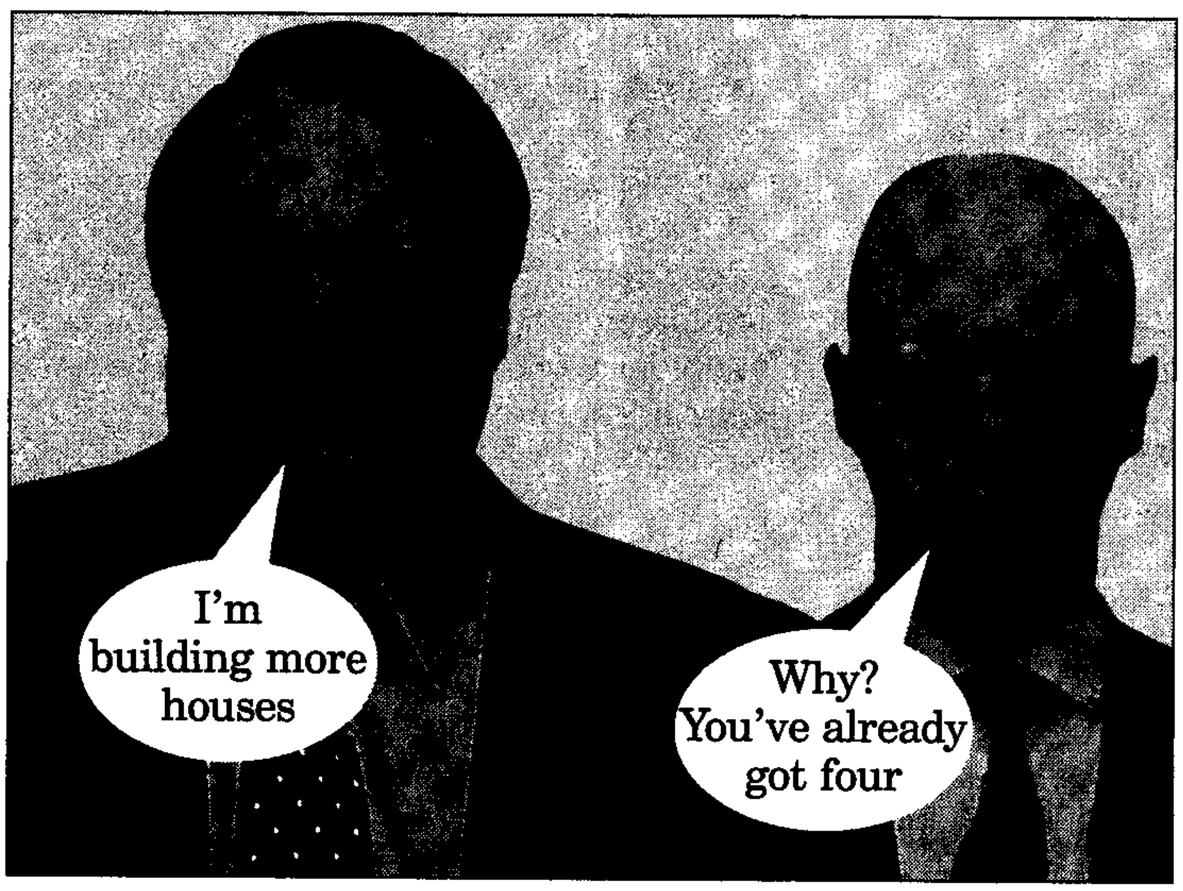
PS: Keith once went on a School trip to
Ottawa.
But he said it was not very Interesting

Thribb of Tooting (17½)

FUN BEACH BLAST!
WITH FAT BORE SLIM
BREEZY BRIGHTON
WE SHALL FIGHT THEM ON THE BEACHES...
I COULDN'T GET YOU ANY CRACK, SO I GOT YOU A STICK OF ROCK
WE CHOSE THE RIGHT BEACH TO GET STONED ON
NO YOU CAN'T SMOKE SEAWEED!
I'M ON A BAD TRIP DAY
OH MY GOD! I'VE CAUGHT CRABS!
PIER
AMUSEMENTS
SHUT UP!
NOT WAVING BUT DROWNING!
TWO'S COMPANY, TWO HUNDRED AN' FIFTY'S A CROWD
BRIGHTON
BRUM! THUD!



MEN IN GREEN (BELT)

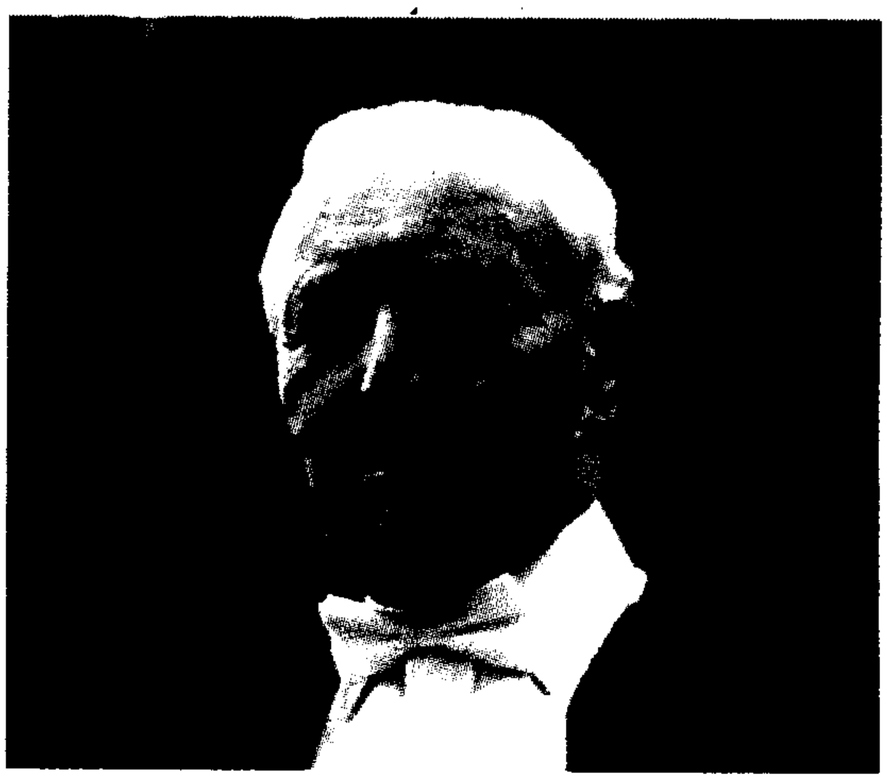


Old Actor Dates Thin Actress

by **Harrison Broad and Skeleta Flockhart**

AN OLD actor was seen out today with a thin actress. "The fact that there is such a big gap between our weights is not a problem," said the thin actress. He is 15 stone and she is only 6 stone 3lb.

"We are very much in the newspaper," said the old actor.



That Tony Benn Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS ANTONIUS BENNUS, QUONDAM WEDGWOODIBUS BENNISSIMO, DOMINUS STANSGATII, SED POPULARITER SOLE "TONIUS", TRIBUNUS PLEBORUM ET COMRADUS SOCIALISTICUS, FAMOSISSIMUS PER BIBENDO MUGGOS GIGANTICOS TYPHOONENSIS PGTIPOSQUE ET PUFFANDO PIPO NICOTINO MALODOROSIMO, SED ATQUE NOTABILE QUA MINISTERIUS TECHNOLOGICUS SUB PONTIFEX HAROLDUS WISLONIUS (MORTUS) ET AEDIFICAVIT COLUMNUM MONUMENTALIUM POSTOFFICUM IN LONDINIUM CUM RESTORANTE REVOLVANDO (NUNC FERMATUS PER DURATIONEM), SED ATQUE MILLIONIBUS VERBIS RECORDATUS IN "JOURNALIOS TONIUS BENNI" PUBLICATUS IN MILLE VOLUMIS INTERMINABILIS STUPENDUS BORUS ET SOMNIFERENTIUS, IN QUO CLAMAVIT "EGO SUM CORRECTUS SEMPER", OCULIS SWIVELLENTIUS ET BONKERIUS, SED NUNC THESPIANUS CELEBRATUS IN THEATRICALIS "UNOS HOMO SPECTACULUS" ADORATUS PER CLASSIBUS MEDIIS IN SUBURBES EG GUILDFORDIUM, CROYDONICUS ET WELLUS TUNBRIDGIENSIS, BOOKITE QUAM CELERRIME UT EVADERE DISAPPOINTIMENTUM. SALUTAMUS SENEX SPARTICUS MAXIMUS.

© UNIVERSITATE PAISLEYENSIS
(QUONDAM HAMILTONIUS ACADEMICALIS)

Celeb

LIGGER

YOU KNOW, TROY, I REALLY ENJOY THIS MORNING RITUAL OF MINE. I DO IT EVERY DAY.
A BRACING WALK DOWN TO THE VILLAGE SHOP TO GET MY DAILY PAPERS..
NEWSAGENT
OPEN
DAILY
MORNING RAJI.
MORNING GARY.
SUPER
FREEZ
NEWS
MY USUAL PACKET OF RED RIZLAS PLEASE. KING SIZE.
THERE YOU GO.
RIZLA

DIARY

MEGA SUMMER READING WITH JACKIE COLLINS

The dressed-to-kill guy walked into the five-star-rated top LA go-to-be-seen restaurant Giovanni's, a fabulously expensive Gucci shoulder-bag draped over his shoulder. All eyes swivelled as he entered.

He had the buttocks of Mick Jagger and the nose of Warren Beatty. The jawbone of Michael Douglas, the pecs of Sylvester Stallone. And the crotch of Bruce Willis.

And they were all packed into his Gucci shoulder-bag.

His name was Sam Sadisto. Hollywood's latest secret sado-serial killer.

A ruthless, mass-murdering kinda guy.

The kinda guy who butchered top mega-stars. Just for kicks.

And the kinda media mogul who wholly-owned top international media corporation MegaMovies.

The kinda guy who knew he could get away.

With murder.

Over the other corner of Giovanni's sat petite, huge-breasted, gypsy-haired, mega-buck Hollywood superstar Andrina Glitzz, who looked like Madonna with a touch of J-Lo, mixed with quite a bit of Jane Russell and Rita Hayworth when they were still alive and topped-off with Sharon Stone.

Jeez, was that babe hot.

"Shit shit shit shit shit shit shit!!!!!" sobbed Andrina. Giovanni had forgotten to place her customary three pinches of salt on her single lettuce leaf – and there was nothing she could do about it.

Her companion, thrice-married Hollywood dark-haired fading mega-hunk Jake Bronze, felt his gorgeous chest-hairs rise up and wave, like a warm blue Caribbean ocean composed largely of hair and painted brown.

His career on the skids since his last movie bombed, his chest-hairs acted as so many finely-tuned antennae to the emotions of other people. At that moment he sensed something was wrong with Andrina.

"Whassup?" he intoned, thrusting his five-fingered hand below the VIP corner-table and letting it shoot up her lip-pink Armani micro-skirt with gold detailing. Andrina moaned. She felt powerless to push him away. She was hot as Santa Monica in August. To hell with lettuce. *Oh god*, she moaned, *this is amazing.*

Jake Bronze had the longest tongue in the whole goddamm business. Still sitting at the table, he released it from his oversize mouth.

It snaked feverishly down his chest, turning outwards past the expensively-laundered crisp white tablecloth, straight along the length of the bottom of the solid teak table, and up Andrina's perfectly-chiselled inner thighs before coming to rest on her red-hot diamond-studded $25000 black lace thong.

Jeez! she gasped. Her phenomenal nipples sprang to attention like the magnificent guards in their busby hats she had seen only last summer outside Buckingham Palace, London, England, the priceless piece of highly desirable real-estate owned by world-famous ruthless property tycoon Queen Elizabeth Two.

Over the other corner of the restaurant sat gorgeous, natural, body-to-die-for Maribella Slinkkke. Ever since her Mom died in the act of saving her from the path of an oncoming train when Maribella was only three years of age she was through with being hurt.

Since that day, Maribella hated violence, just hated it. *Hated it.* She was through with being hurt. These days, she couldn't see a head being snapped off another human being by an oncoming train without flinching somewhere deep inside.

"Huh!" grunted John-Travolta-lookalike top Hollywood director triple-Oscar-winning Salvatore Franco. He had no need of words.

"Huh?" replied Maribella, quizzically. She was through with being hurt.

"Huh," confirmed Franco, firmly.

"Huh," agreed Maribella, good-naturedly.

"Huh!" exclaimed Franco, defiantly.

Huh, though Maribella, thoughtfully, I'm through with being hurt. Yup. One thing was for sure.

She was through with being hurt.

Over the other corner of the restaurant, fading 39-year-old mega-star Pasta Vermicelli fingered her vastly expensive, expertly-prepared sushimi with her long, aquiline toes. Ever since top Hollywood surgeon bespectacled Jack Lemmon lookalike Dr Mike Decent had so expertly fixed those wrinkles around her fingers, she now had the beautiful smooth hands of a ten-month-old baby girl, even if it did mean she had to eat with her feet.

"You're SURE I now look as good as it gets?" she had begged Dr Decent as he stripped off the plasters from her head, hands and chest.

She stared down at her naked body with mounting excitement.

She now had the gorgeous bosoms of Marilyn Monroe. One on either side of her own.

"Four breasts! It's SO the very latest mega-fashion in cosmetic surgery!" Dr Decent assured her, warmly.

How can I thank him enough, thought Pasta, her eyes riveted to his huge crotch as it swayed gently in the breeze beneath the thin covering of his expensive Harrods of London pure cotton trousers.

Now Pasta Vermicelli sat in Giovanni's, her cleavages proudly displayed over the top of her Versace all-in silken double-mesh body-stocking, waiting for the gorgeous, highly-intelligent man who had made her young again, this mega-handsome but vastly intelligent phenomenally endowed yet brainy man who had gained a double first in sums at Harvard – without even trying.

Sam Sadisto cast a cold ruthless eye over the mega-glamorous Giovanni's A-List celebrity clientele.

With the other eye, he took a long, hard look at the machete he was hiding in his manly palm.

Who would be his next Hollywood mega-victim?

In the far corner, Andrina Glitzz was going down on mega-hunk Jake Bronze over a $72 plate of fresh Linguini, specially flown in that day from Rome, Italy.

In the opposite corner, big-new-thing Salvatore Franco was smearing his main-course portion of finest Beluga caviare over Maribella Slinkkke's thrusting ass, his tongue wrapped round her body, prolonging her orgasm and sending her past the point of no return, making her cry out – *HUH! HUH! HUH!* – for him to stop.

Yup. *She looked like a girl who was through with being hurt.*

In the remaining corner of the top restaurant, legendary sex symbol Pasta Vermicelli was pleasuring legendary surgeon Dr Mike Decent while his long fingers expertly renovated her left eyelid with a skill borne of a lifetime's experience.

Evil tycoon Sam Sadisto thought long and hard. Who would be his next mega-victim?

One thing was for sure.

It will take my legendarily mega-sad reader 532 pages to find out.

AS TOLD TO
CRAIG BROWN

Literary Review

Piss... and shit with it

The Man Who Walks
(Cape £10.99)
Morvern Callar
(Vintage £6.99)
Alan Warner

TO MAKE a mark on the literary scene these days a young writer should include something fairly disgusting in his book. Some weird sex, for instance, or the grisly dismemberment of a body. Alan Warner made his mark with *Morvern Callar*, a tale told by an idiot (the eponymous shopgirl) full of drink, drugs, sex and suicide and some rather repellent yoof-med holiday antics. Naturally it won the Somerset Maugham award and has now been turned into a film. Warner's name has been yoked to that of Irvine Welsh and others to form what lit eds have been pleased to call a Scottish literary renaissance. (These seem to come round about once a decade, by the way. Remember the great claims made for Iain Banks and Candia McWilliam in their day? And where is former Whitbread winner Jeff Torrington now?)

Hyping up the ante, Jonathan Crap has pulled out all the promotional stops for Warner's fourth fictional outing, *The Man Who Walks*. More rambling than ambling, it is a pointless picaresque (ie shaggy dog story) involving some delightfully disgusting scenes. The bit where someone pees in someone else's mouth has generated rampant column inches in at least one respectable Sunday. But if that doesn't grab you, how about setting fire to rats or budgerigars; stuffing faeces into condoms or frozen peas into little girls' bottoms; or, to cap that urolagnia, a spot of coprophagia?

The *Scotsman* declared Warner "the voice of his generation". So what exactly is that generation saying? "Yacuntya!" on practically every page. There isn't much of a plot. Someone called the Nephew is on the trail of his mad one-eyed uncle, the Man Who Walks, who has supposedly stolen £27,000 from the local pub's World Cup kitty and embarked on a bender of drink and destruction. On the way the Nephew encounters various other mad, violent or perverted characters with or to whom he does mad, violent or perverted things (see above). It ends with a hilarious kneecapping, rendered in nauseating detail.

The narrative, which has been politely described as surreal, is interspersed with flashbacks of a weird childhood and some rather solemn speeches citing Swift, Nietzsche, Camus, Beckett and others, apparently vying for lit cred in the same way as Morvern Callar vies for bedsit cred by constantly mentioning the obscure 70s rock music your girl is listening to on her walkman.

For a fourth novel, *The Man Who Walks* seems surprisingly uneven and inchoate, the suspicion being that it is in fact a stringing together of a load of bottom-drawer juvenilia and late night out-of-head doodlings. Or perhaps Warner, overpraised, has simply released himself from any obligation to his readers and embarked on a bender of self-indulgence. "Sub-literary ravings", as the Nephew describes his uncle's bogus memoirs.

It will be interesting to see how the film version of *Morvern Callar*, to be released shortly, handles the pivotal plot device of that book, which concerns plagiarism. The narrator's boyfriend commits suicide leaving a completed novel on his computer; she deletes his name and substitutes her own before sending it off to a publisher. Of course it's brilliant and is accepted first time. This idea (first published 1995) was so interesting and original that not just one but two other authors have subsequently come up with it. In Terence Blacker's *Kill Your Darlings* (2000) a blocked writer in London adopts as his own a brilliant novel by one of his students, who has also conveniently committed suicide. In John Colapinto's *About The Author* (2001) a blocked writer in New York adopts the novel left on his room-mate's laptop after the latter dies in a road accident; but in a neat twist it turns out the room-mate has based his novel on the protagonist's own life story, itself a sort of plagiarism. Blacker plays it as social comedy; Colapinto, rather more successfully, as a Hitchcockian thriller.

For Warner's idea to have been replicated once may be considered accidental; for it to happen twice begins to look like, er, one of those cheap quotes from Oscar Wilde. Of course it's not unheard of for writers to come up with the same ideas for books quite independently. Odd, though, that the subject of plagiarism should itself apparently have been plagiarised. Yacuntya.

Janet down the john

Hard Eight
Janet Evanovich
(Headline, £12.99)

THE Carl Hiassen influence in modern American fiction is horribly pervasive. Even bad writers have their imitators, of course, and Janet Evanovich, whose current offering – such is the way of the modern literary world – reposes in the upper half of the hardback top ten might be Uncle Carl's even less talented niece. She is meant to be a "funny writer" but, compared to her fitful strivings to hold down a joke, Olivia Goldsmith is Dorothy Parker reincarnate and P.J. O'Rourke oh, I don't know, a James Thurber for the 21st century.

She doesn't do plot and she doesn't do establishing detail (road, house, TV playing, man opening door is about the descriptive limit here) but, like Hiassen, by God can she banter. Put her pistol-packing bounty-hunting heroine Stephanie Plum in a room with a sidekick and a bozo she's just knocked unconscious and you just *know* the conversation will go: "Is he dead?" "He smells dead." "No, he always smells like that." Let Ms Plum hook up with her hunk of an ex (sort of) cop boyfriend and, yup, watch that dialogue crackle like a waterlogged spark-plug. We broke up, you remember. Yes, but there's all kinds of breaking up. Is that pizza in your hair?

There is a framework for all this, just about. At least there is a supporting cast and some kind of notional pursuit going on. Accompanied by her large, black, ex-streetwalking assistant Lula, Stephanie is on the trail of a bond-jumping grand-daughter of her parents' neighbour named Evelyn. Grandma stands to lose her house if she don't show. Evelyn's ex ain't the guy you want to have shine your shoes, buster, and as for Mr Abruzzi who owns the joint, that is one bad motherfucker.

You can see how infectious this quaint, badass New Jersey jive can turn; but, alas, even Steph's interior monologues have that distinctive damp firecracker sheen. Things weren't all bad, she decides at one point, chewing her breakfast selection of high-calorie fast food. Why, she could be living in New Hampshire where she'd be forced to mailorder Tastykakes to herself. Blasting a few shots down the apartment fire escape at some shadowy intruder she muses that "I might have killed someone. I *hate* when that happens."

And so, brightly, cutely and interminably, it goes on. Some asshole is sending her crates of snakes. Evelyn's ex gets his bar torched and his person sawn in half. It reads like the rejected first draft of a frat-house movie from the early 80s, plus drugs, guns and maimings. Yet, thankfully, by this stage the reader can observe another comic principle at work. Ms E is a great believer in the old adage that if a joke works once it'll work a thousand times. But what if it doesn't work the first time? At this point I'd like to welcome aboard Evelyn's pudgy attorney Albert Kloughn, whose name its creator fondly assumes will serve as a long-term rib-tickler.

"Where's the red nose that goes *beep beep*?" Lula dutifully inquires on page 28. "Evelyn hired a clown for a lawyer. Perfect" Mr Abruzzi larksomely chips in ten pages later. "I hate clowns. They creep me out" Bender the bond-absconder remarks on page 73. Then there is plump Albert's food addiction, signalled by the enquiry "Do you like...?", followed by a list of takeaway hypotheses and wheeled in on pages 30, 68, 81 and 136, after which I rather feebly stopped counting.

The trouble with all this is that it simply chirps, and chirpiness, alas, is not capable of dealing with some of the serious stuff lurking beneath. Confronted by Mr Abruzzi's icy threats of ripped out hearts or Lula's crackhouse past and her abuse at the hands of dead heavyweight boxer Benito Ramirez, the reader merely gawps – nothing in the rest of the book gives him any clue how to deal with it, and the procedural compass consequently wavers all over the place.

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
BEFORE GOING ON HOLIDAY YOU'VE GOT TO STOCK UP ON TRAVEL BOOKS!
ITALY
THE ART OF TRAVEL
SIDE BOOK
THE ROAD TO
THEY'RE SOMETHING TO READ WHEN YOU'RE STUCK AT THE AIRPORT
ALL FLIGHTS CANCELLED

Books & Bookmen

■ THE death of John Entwistle, the Who's bass player, was sad for family and fans. But for music book specialists Genesis Publications it represented a spiffing promotional opportunity which the company seized.

At the time of the Ox's demise the company was in the final stages of preparing a limited-edition coffee-table book on the group's history, *Maximum Who*, including text from the late Entwistle, trout farmer Roger Daltrey and erstwhile Faber *eminence grise* Pete Townshend.

Now copies are ready and the publisher is trying to drum up trade with an onion-steeped letter explaining how "greatly saddened by the sudden loss" it is and how "honoured" it was "to work with him". The indecent haste perhaps stems from the book's RRP: "regular copies" go for £234 plus postage, while "deluxe copies" (bound in leather and signed by the Who's resident fish farmer) are priced at £390 excluding P&P.

■ IN THE last *Eye* we reported the launch of Metro founder Susanne McDadd's value-for-money online consultancy service for desperate authors, in which she offers to look over an introduction and a couple of sample chapters for £150 (roughly £150 more than any of the authors she published at Metro received).

Now, nestling in the small ads at the back of the *Author*, Lisanne Radice – wife of Labour MP Giles and the co-proprietor of the Gregory and Radice agency until she was squeezed out by her partner Jane Gregory – is offering a similar service for just £100.

While Radice's proposal is marginally better value than McMadd's, is it ethical for either to tout for cash from gullible, often hopeless hopefuls when a reputable and conscientious agent (such as Radice once was) would offer the same critical service for free, only taking any money if and when a book is published?

■ IT WAS thought that the death of Alan Ross in February 2001 spelled the end for the *London Magazine* and its London Magazine Editions publishing list. Indeed, Ross' widow Jane Rye indicated this was the case. Soon, however, it emerged that Rye had flogged the *LM* to Christopher Arkell, a prominent Eurosceptic nutter, for £50,000.

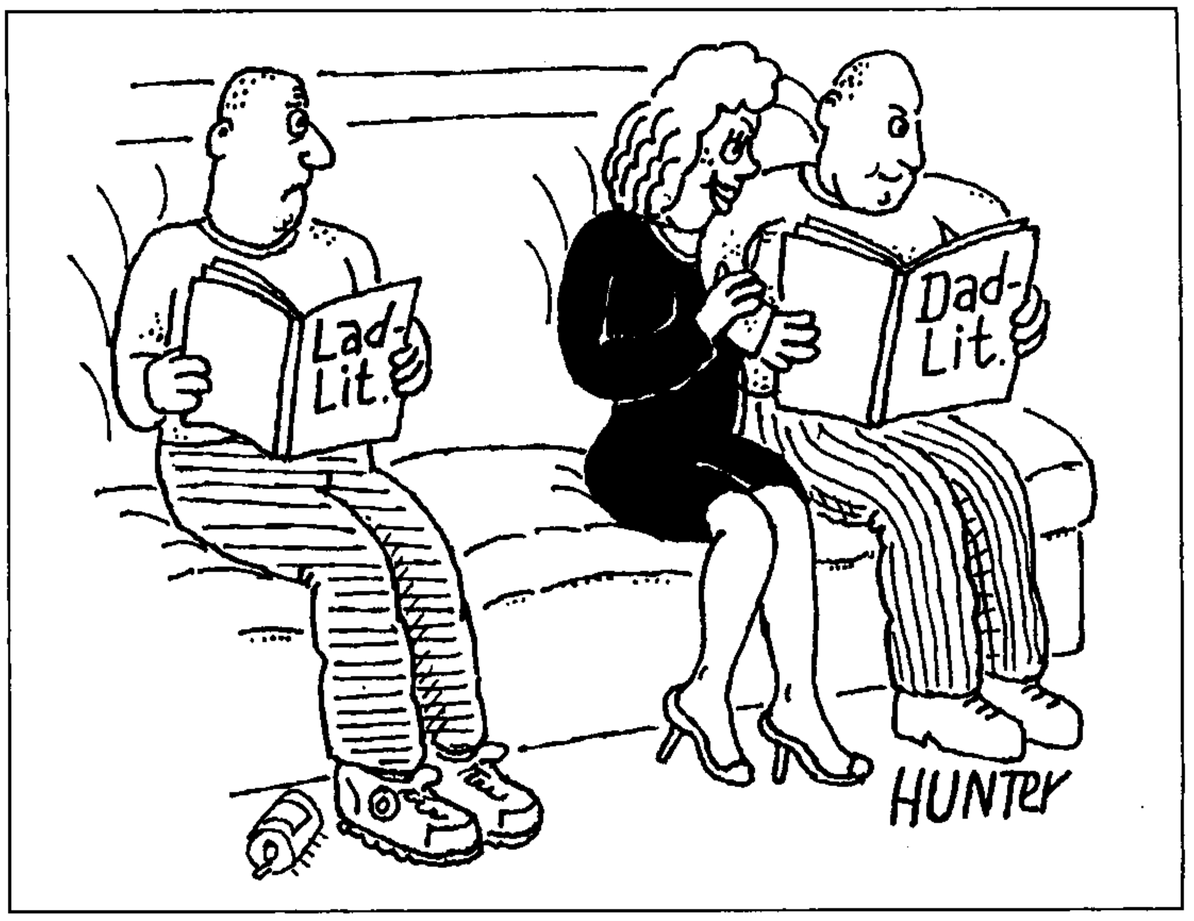
Curiously Arkell was already publishing a magazine with the curiously similar title of the *London Miscellany*, although there the similarity ends. Where Ross encouraged the coverage of a wide spectrum of the arts and literature, the *London Miscellany* is a collection of right-wing ramblings, to which Arkell's friends Neil and Christine Hamilton have both been enthusiastic contributors.

Poets Cornered

■ THE small but perfectly formed world of modern British poets looks even smaller following the announcement of the shortlist for the Forward Prize, Britain's biggest poetry award.

This year's judges include two poets published by Picador (Sean O'Brien and Michael Donaghy), who have shortlisted two other Picador poets (Peter Porter and Paul Farley) for the £10,000 top prize. Last year's judging panel also included two Picador poets – Donaghy (again) and Peter Porter.

Last year Porter gave the main prize to Sean O'Brien. What's the betting O'Brien won't now give it back to his mentor, enabling both friends to pocket ten grand? Or will their protégé Paul Farley be the one to take the loot this time round?



Last year the £5,000 prize for "best first collection" went to another Picador poet, John Stammers (a product of Donaghy's poetry workshops), and the £1,000 "best single poem" prize was given to Ian Duhig for a poem – you guessed it – from his forthcoming Picador collection. The same poem earlier won Duhig the £5,000 top prize in the Poetry Society's national poetry competition, judged by a three-man panel including his mate Don Paterson, the foul-mouthed Scottish bard who also happens to be the poetry editor at, er, Picador.

This year's five-poet Forward shortlist includes two other chums, David Harsent and John Fuller (winner of the Forward prize in 1996, when one of the judges was again Sean O'Brien). And Sean O'Brazen was one of three judges of the 1997 T. S. Eliot prize (worth £5,000), which was awarded to... his own editor, Don Paterson.

Duhig, Donaghy, O'Brien, Harsent and Paterson all have the same agent, TriplePA, aka Gerry Wardle – who just happens to be Sean O'Brien's partner. And Donaghy, Duhig, Farley, Fuller, Harsent, Paterson and Porter have all received fulsome write-ups from the *Sunday Times*'s main poetry critic, one Sean O'Brien.

Those outside the charmed circle may wonder if there are any poets worth honouring who don't happen to be Picador authors, friends of O'Brien or clients of his missus. (Are there, for example, some meritorious women? Apparently not, to judge by the omission of Alice Oswald, Carol Ann Duffy, Helen Dunmore and Selima Hill from the Forward list.) Until the Forward organisers desist from asking O'Brazen and his cronies to judge their prize, we may never know.

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

Genuinely moving, candid and funny, *Kurt Cobain: Journals* will give an insight into the mind of one of the twentieth-century's most creative and troubled geniuses…

Advertisement, *The Bookseller*

It occurred to me, as I read last night, that if the war between Hitler and Stalin represented the nadir of human civilisation, then tennis, Tim Henman and the Surrey way of life that he epitomises represents its zenith. In the battle for Stalingrad, human nature showed itself in its ugliest, most bestial, least human form. In the world of Surrey and tennis, everything is controlled, ordered, comfortable.

TOM UTLEY
Daily Telegraph

In my mind's eye Shakespeare is a huge, hot sea-beast, with fire in his veins and ice on his claws and inscrutable eyes, who looks like an inchoate hump under the encrustations of live-barnacle commentaries, limpets and trailing weeds.

A.S. BYATT
Guardian

For Hygiene, Arias presents the banal object of the roll of toilet paper as a comment on both the pretensions of art and the attempts to refuse the abject body. The loo roll, casually deployed, demonstrates an anti-aesthetic and throw-away attitude to inclusion in the 'body' of the exhibition. The abnegation then resonates with the toilet roll as thing. Its function comments on our uneasy relation to the excreted, thrown away; all that is our own excrement.

Explanatory note next to toilet roll displayed as part of an exhibition entitled 'Hygiene: The Art of Public Health', London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

After scoring his penalty against Argentina, Becks' zooming run across the pitch, arms flaring out behind, looked like the most sublime release of tension in his footballing career. It also made him look like a little boy flying an imaginary Spitfire. Was it too fanciful to imagine that Becks, at that critical moment, was summoning his very own ancestral spirits, the fighter pilots of the Battle of Britain?

JUDITH MACKRELL
Guardian

Pseuds Corporate

Q26 Why did you choose Inscape – what does it mean?

A Inscape was first used as a descriptor by Gerard Manly [sic] Hopkins (a 19th century Jesuit priest and poet) as a descriptor meaning the unique inner quality or essence of an object. This is particularly relevant to our service which is designed to help turn individuals' dreams into reality. We decided on a name we thought was neither too traditional nor too abstract.

First National Mortgage Company introduces its 'Inscape' service

TOM PETERS 1942 – Present

Peters is the irrepressible and charismatic management genius of the late 20th and early 21st century. The best-selling business author of all time, described as business' "best friend and worst nightmare".

From a flyer advertising Peters' 'One day national management conference' at the Hilton Metropole, London. (Peters appears in a gallery of 'Pioneers of Progress' including David Hume, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein etc.)

CONTRIBUTORS: Strobes, 'P.R.', Dominic Barter, Sarah Castle, Neil Wyatt, Laura A. Brown, Adrian Lithgow.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE TORSO MURDERS

OH, FOR FOX SAKE!

IT WAS bad luck on David Blunkett that on the very day he announced plans to "tip the balance of justice away from the accused to the victim", the court of appeal quashed one of the most monstrous injustices of modern times.

Bob Maynard and Reg Dudley, convicted at the Old Bailey in 1976 of the so-called "torso murders", served a quarter of a century in prison, constantly protesting their innocence. The evidence that finally acquitted them showed how easy it was for police and prosecution to secure convictions and jail innocent men.

Bob Maynard

Reg Dudley

The case against the men relied almost entirely on unsigned oral confessions they are alleged to have made to police officers. The only supporting evidence came from the inevitable "prison grass": one Tony Wild, who eventually became a Born Again Christian and denounced his story as a pack of lies inspired by the police.

The confessions to the police were woven into notes taken down by police officers. One such interview was at last submitted to handwriting experts. According to the times reported by the police, the notes of this interview had been taken down at the rate of 240 characters a minute. The fastest time ever recorded for taking down dictation was 190 characters a minute. The notes, in short, must have been faked.

Scotland Yard says it is "disappointed" by the result. This is not surprising: the list of police officers involved in the fake interviews reads like a roll-call of its top officers over the last two decades. At the top of the list was the man known as the Old Grey Fox, Commander Bert Wickstead. Mr Wickstead died in April, to unanimous and gushing praise. The man writing down his note of the so-called confessions was the then detective chief inspector Lloyd Hughes, who rose to the rank of commander in the Met, and retired last year.

Side by side with the Met during this inquiry were Hertfordshire police, represented then by detective chief superintendent Ronald Harvey, who later became a deputy assistant commissioner in the Met and a member of HM inspectorate of police. Another officer involved in the interviews was the then young detective sergeant John McCammont, who became a detective chief superintendent in West Mercia police and head of CID there. When he retired recently he was kept on as a consultant to the legal department.

All these officers signed the fake interviews as a correct record of what the accused had said. The ESDA test for documents was only invented in 1990; but before Mr Wickstead's famous hard-back red notebook in which these interviews were recorded could be tested, the original was mysteriously lost. The prosecution case was based entirely on the evidence of the men's confessions. Was it possible, or even conceivable, the judge asked the jury, for so many highly-respected police officers from different forces and of different ranks from the highest to the lowest to have conspired together to construct fake interviews and invent confessions that were never made? Yes, as the two men's counsel, Jonathan Goldberg QC, told the appeal court, it now appears it was.

After serving the 18 years in prison recommended by the then lord chief justice, Mr Maynard and Mr Dudley were offered parole on condition they confessed to the murders. They refused to do so, on the ground that they had not committed them. They were then accused by the home office of showing no remorse, and were therefore a danger to the public. They spent another seven years in prison before finally proving their innocence.

FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP

■ **LYNDE HOUSE:** More on the old people's home in Twickenham, west London, *which* generated a catalogue of complaints about the alleged neglect and suffering of some of its residents.

Last week an inquest recorded a verdict of accidental death on Maria Jackson, 78, who died after falling from a bath hoist. Friends and relatives of elderly residents were disappointed the inquest stuck rigidly to the circumstances surrounding Ms Jackson's fall and did not explore wider issues.

They are angry that the only independent scrutiny of their complaints – when the home was run by Labour donor and private health guru Chai Patel's Westminster Health Care – is being sat on by the local health authority. The report is known to be highly critical of Westminster Health Care and the former Kingston and Richmond health authority.

A report published last week by the National Care Standards Commission showed things had improved but still raised concerns in several areas.

The unpublished report, meanwhile, now belongs to the new South West London health authority, which says it will publish as soon as possible. The *Eye* understands a major part of the delay is due to Westminster Health Care wanting parts of the report re-written.

■ **STANLEY INQUEST:** Dr Stephen Chan, the coroner whose handling of the police shooting of Harry Stanley is to be challenged in the high court, is to take early retirement, the *Eye* has learned.

Chan, 53, had become something of a legend in legal circles for his autocratic and boorish conduct of cases. He has been known to rip up written legal submissions, muttering: "I am not reading that." He has also ordered lawyers to shut up, sit down or get out – and often failed to give reasons as required for questionable decisions. He has attracted complaints to the lord chancellor's department, the home office and, in the Stanley case, a challenge by way of judicial review.

■ **POLICE RADIOS:** Warnings by the national audit office (NAO) that the new police radio system Airwave might not only provide poor value for money but also endanger officers' health appear to be coming true.

More than 170 officers in Lancashire, one force that has been trying out the £1bn-plus system, have reported complaints including nausea, headaches, burning sensations, lack of concentration and an inability to sleep.

In North Yorkshire guinea-pig officers are also reporting problems associated with the use of the Tetra-system. It offers better reception and sound quality and is more secure, but it uses pulse rates close to those at which the brain operates and which some scientists fear may be harmful.

But the force's chief constable Peter Walker defends the trial and says there is no conclusive proof of the system's safety either way.

ACCOUNTANCY

KPMG: KEEP PUFFING MY GOODS

AS an example of the "infectious greed" that has caused so much mayhem on the international stock exchanges, you couldn't find better than Elan, the Irish drugs company whose spectacular joy ride on the Dublin exchange fooled all the pundits.

In July 2000 Goodbody stockbrokers recommended Elan "given its strong performance over the past few quarters". In January last year the American business magazine *Forbes* published its annual global "A-list", singling out three Irish-based companies. None of the three, *Forbes* boasted, "shines as brightly as Elan. The pharmaceutical giant has been the feature of numerous positive profiles over the past 12 months and has certainly repaid investors who saw the shares jump 74 percent last year, adding to the 429 percent improvement since 1996. Geaney [Donal Geaney, chairman and chief executive] has his target of two billion dollars in revenues by 2003, and is betting the future on new drugs."

And in November last year the *Sunday Times* Business News, always on the look-out for business successes, especially in Ireland, the home country of editor Rory Godson, reported: "Elan shares are positive on the year to date and look like going further."

Misery engulfed any punter who followed Godson's tip. Within a few months the huge Elan bubble had burst. The company that had dominated the Dublin stock exchange was suddenly reduced to nothing. The "wonder drugs" it had promised did not materialise; and some imaginative accounting practices had hidden a deep black back hole in the accounts.

The business press was shocked into silence. But the *Sunday Times* Business News continued to lavish publicity on the company even as it writhed in agony. Finally, on 7 July, when the game was up, Rory Godson held up his hands. "We were all duped by Elan's smoke and mirrors", was the headline over his apologia. "It is less than two months since Donal Geaney chairman and chief executive of Elan Corporation sat down with this newspaper in an attempt to convince an increasingly sceptical market that the Irish pharmaceutical company's accounts were completely above board."

Exactly what happened at that cosy sit-down was not disclosed, but somehow the *Sunday Times* Business News continued to be "duped". Godson ended his piece as follows: "We admit Elan was one of the shares we tipped to outperform the market this year. We intend to get stuck in the humble pie, and gladly invite certain members of the stockbroking and credit-rating industries to join us at the table." Whether such an unedifying feast actually took place is not yet clear.

FACT: Elan's auditor was the wizard from Bermuda, KPMG.

ANOTHER FACT: Donal Geaney is a former partner of one of KPMG's predecessor firms.

YET ANOTHER FACT: Tom Lynch, Elan's vice chairman and the financial genius behind the firm's deal-making, was once a partner in... KPMG.

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£39,462 – £58,520

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£34,300 - £48,300

Department for International Development Advertisement

HEP C... A BLOODY DISGRACE?

WHILE up to 600,000 Britons are likely to become seriously ill in the next few years with the potentially fatal hepatitis C virus, government and health authorities are floundering about what to do about it.

Their inactivity means that widespread ignorance about the virus persists – as illustrated by the example of Jonathan Gems, a former Hollywood scriptwriter who believes he contracted the liver disease from gum surgery five years ago.

Gems, who runs a production company in west London, has never been an intravenous drug user, has not had a blood transfusion or a tattoo; and his only known potential exposure to the blood-born virus was dental work in Los Angeles.

Gems recently carried out a straw poll among local dentists and found that not one of them rigorously sterilised or protected equipment or machinery between patients. Indeed, only one seemed to know much about the disease at all. It is this lack of awareness that is so hazardous.

In 1994 a study in Cambridge of organ donors suggested the virus might be carried by just over one *in 100* of the population. Blood samples from pregnant women suggested a similar figure; but as hep C affects twice as many men as women, it could be even more prevalent. No one really knows because the UK has commissioned no meaningful study.

Most people who have hepatitis C don't know they have it. It can take between 20 and 30 years before symptoms appear and it progresses to life-threatening cirrhosis or liver cancer. Thus they will not seek treatment or properly manage the disease in the crucial early stages, and in ignorance they may pass it on.

The British Liver Trust and Hepatitis C Trust have called it the "stealth" or "silent" epidemic and predict that up to 60,000 people are likely to become seriously ill in the next few years. Most will have been infected by shared syringes or, like haemophiliacs, after being given tainted blood transfusions before blood was properly treated. Tattooing and body piercing, believed to be responsible for the increase among younger patients, as well as acupuncture, surgery, dentistry and even sharing razors and tooth brushes also pose a potential risk.

Worldwide, the World Health Organisation estimates there are 170 million sufferers. Hep C, which emerged as a "new" killer virus at about the same time as HIV, was first recognised as "non A non B hepatitis" and properly identified in 1989. It is a more efficient virus than HIV, infecting many millions more; but probably because of its slow incubation it has never attracted the resources or policies that have been poured into HIV research and treatment.

While some western countries get to grips with the epidemic, Britain is still dithering. An expert report on developing a national strategy was due last January but there is still no sign of it.

France, which plans to identify 85 percent of its infected population by next year, last year treated 18,000 of them with the latest anti-viral drugs which are successful in about 60 percent of cases. Germany, Italy and the US – whose infection rates are said to be well over one in 100 – are also treating many thousands of people each year.

In England and Wales we treated a mere 1,300 people last year and are still waiting for NICE, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, to make up its mind about the drug regime. For many people that will be too late.

PS: The thousands of haemophiliacs who contracted hepatitis C from contaminated blood supplies are looking enviously across the Atlantic where similarly stricken counterparts are securing large sums in damages from the blood suppliers. Deaths of haemophiliacs in this country from hep C rose last year from 113 to 212. Despite gathering new evidence showing how they were put at unnecessary risk for years, haemophiliacs are getting nowhere in their fight for compensation and a public inquiry.

CHERRY AID

DEPUTY prime minister John Prescott has back pedalled on his recent announcement that the government would short-circuit established planning procedures for development. But his department has still reversed a decision to hold a planning inquiry into a controversial development proposed by Countryside Properties, whose chairman Alan Cherry is a "new" Labour favourite.

Cherry has made a fortune from property speculation and development, mainly in Essex, and was therefore the obvious choice to be chairman of the governors of Anglia Polytechnic University and to secure a place on the government's urban task force and the East of England Development Agency.

One of Countryside's longest-lasting and most controversial proposed developments is at Colliers Wood, Merton, in south London where the firm wants to build 283 luxury flats, a 120-bedroom hotel, a health and fitness club, two huge restaurants and something called a heritage centre.

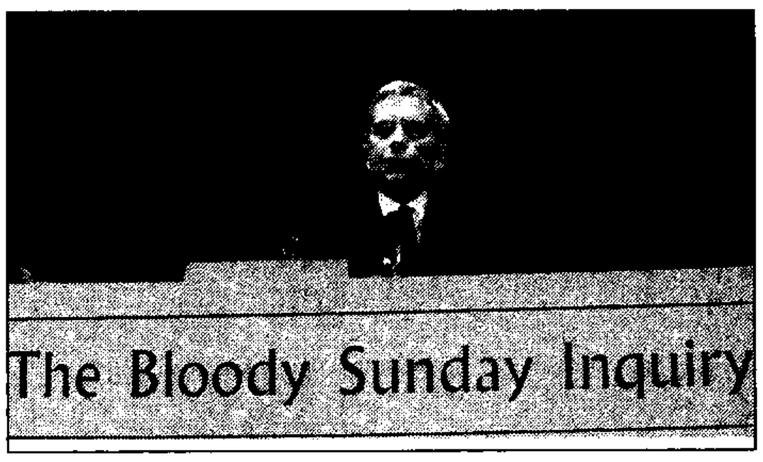
When the plans were published in 2000 they attracted virulent opposition from local groups such as the Abbey Mills Tenants Association and Wandle Heritage. At least 11,000 people objected. Some of the opposition was plain NIMBYism. But the opponents' main case – that the development was designed solely for those with lots of money – worried some old-fashioned planners in the government's Office for London who noticed the complete absence of any affordable housing.

The 283 homes in the plans are affordable only to people in the same sort of income bracket as Alan Cherry; and the lack of affordable housing inspired the planning minister in John Prescott's office, Lord Falconer, to "call in" the development for a public inquiry. He did so in April and the opponents of the scheme sank back in relief. A planning inquiry would give them time and space to publicise their objections and alert local people to the fact that the new development, quite apart from creating hideous parking problems, catered only for the rich.

Imagine their surprise and disgust when Lord Falconer's office decided a few weeks later that the inquiry it had ordered would now be unnecessary, and that the development could go ahead with government blessing.

What caused the U-turn? The deputy prime minister's office told the *Eye* the change was "due to the availability of new information about the location and sufficiency of affordable housing provision". This seems to mean that Countryside Properties has agreed to pay £3.7m to the Merton council so it can start to build – at some other location – the affordable housing Countryside Properties had disdained. This is a miserable sum for the purpose, and a miserable proportion of the profits Countryside Properties can expect. But the important thing is that a "new" Labour champion has been spared the delay and worry of petty government planning procedures.

SAVILLE ROW



RECENT developments at the Bloody Sunday inquiry raise serious doubts whether any inquiry could get to the truth about the activities of security and intelligence agencies in Northern Ireland.

The inquiry under Lord Saville of Newdigate adjourned for the summer on 20 June; 550 witnesses having given evidence over 224 days.

On 27 May Saville ruled that an MI5 agent code-named Infliction, who had allegedly told his handlers that he heard Martin McGuinness, now Sinn Fein education minister at Stormont, admit firing the first shot on Bloody Sunday, need not give evidence. The ruling was made on the basis of information supplied to Saville and his fellow tribunal members at a private meeting with MI5 officials in London four days earlier.

Whatever MI5 told the trio was enough to persuade them that "to call or indeed to make an attempt to call" Infliction would put his life at unacceptable risk. When Lord Gifford, for the family of one of the Bloody Sunday dead, raised the matter, Lord Saville assured him that "there has not been a secret hearing, merely a private meeting at which secret material had been imparted". Gifford responded gloomily: "Whatever there is in the secret material, it is secret. I cannot make submissions upon it."

The key Infliction document, notes of a debriefing in 1984, remains before the inquiry. Infliction's handlers, "A" and "B", are still scheduled to testify and are expected to say that he was a credible source. On 20 May, a public interest immunity (gagging order) application signed by home office minister John Denham was submitted to Saville, demanding that what Gifford described as "bizarre and unprecedented" arrangements be made for hearing the evidence of "A", "B", and that further material relating to Infliction be withheld. Denham explained: "I have personally examined the material"; and "with the benefit of advice from security service and home office officials", he decided to endorse the gagging order. An unpublished "sensitive schedule" to the application set out his reasoning. In other words, not only is the material to be kept secret, but the reason it must be kept secret is also secret.

On 27 May, Philip Sales, counsel for MI5, demanded that "A", "B" give evidence behind closed doors, with not even the lawyers for the families or the British soldiers present; and that MI5 be then allowed to vet and edit the transcript of the evidence before it is conveyed to the legal teams. Sales cited Denham's 20 June application claiming "a significant risk that during the course of the questioning... evidence might be given, whether inadvertently or maliciously, which might assist others to identify or wrongly identify `Infliction'." Gifford pointed out that more than 100 witnesses, mainly soldiers and five former members of the official IRA, had already been granted anonymity, and that it had been standard practice to remind witnesses not to mention their names. Why the difference? Ah, said Sales, that was all fully explained in the secret material.

Lord Saville has not yet ruled on the PII application. He will be aware that if he rejects the application, there will certainly be an appeal to the high court. Precedent suggests that such an appeal will find in Denham's and MI5's favour. There have so far been six appeals against Saville rulings denying soldiers anonymity and their right to testify in Britain rather than in Derry. The score currently stands at Saville 0, MI5 6.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

WHAT lies behind the cash squeeze at premiership under-achievers Chelsea, whose stock market valuation at £37m is now around a third of its long term borrowings and close to half its short term debt (never a good sign) based on the latest published figures?

In recent weeks there has been speculation that even star players such as Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Eidar Gudjohnsen may be sold while a pre-season tour of the Far East was suddenly cancelled.

Chelsea is essentially a potentially profitable soccer club burdened by the cost of chairman Ken Bates's dreams to be a property developer, hotel owner, travel agent and restaurateur. The result? Borrowings of £97m at the last count and an £11m loss in 2001 for the Chelsea Village group.

Bates may have persuaded the Football Association (which clearly knows sweet FA about finance) that his Stamford Bridge creation was a triumph – which is presumably why he was initially given the task of overseeing the fiasco that is the rebuilding of the national stadium at Wembley – but the City knows better. Which is why the shares have declined from more than 160p to the current 21p. They were floated in 1996 at 55p.

A clue to the current cash squeeze may lie in the £5m loan due to be repaid by the club on 31 July. This interest only five-year loan is guaranteed by the Matthew Harding estate.

Chelsea is understood to have approached the Harding estate seeking an extension of the guarantee. It is thought unlikely that the estate will be happy to extend that guarantee (if it has a choice, which it may not) given that relations between Harding's widow Ruth and Bates are not warm.

Whether the bank will demand repayment of the full £5m, creating a potential cash flow problem for Chelsea, remains to be seen next week. No extension and it would then be up to Chelsea to either repay or persuade another bank to refinance the loan.

Perhaps Bates will be able to rely on his old friend Ashraf Marwan who has resurfaced as a substantial shareholder in Chelsea Village. He certainly won't be able to rely on his even older friend Stanley Tollman, currently dodging the Feds and a tax fraud charge in New York.

Ironically Bates personally has been helping the police with their inquiries into an advance fee fraud. It seems that some months ago Bates was contacted by Scotland Yard after it received information that he was the target of an attempted fraud. The fraudsters, knowing that football clubs need cash, had offered to raise up to £200m for Chelsea. No doubt the canny Bates saw through the plot which is why he did not proceed even if £200m would have come in handy.

MONEY is also too tight to mention for another premiership chairman, phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed at Fulham, where Fayed is said to be looking to unload expensive manager Jean Tigana.

A firm of private investigators was recently consulted by Fayed about Tigana, who has a year left on his £1m-plus a year contract. It seems Fayed then changed his mind about an investigation, doubtless because it was unjustified.

After pouring more than £50m into Fulham for no financial return, it is not surprising Fayed is feeling the pressure. That investment will have risen last season and will keep on rising this season. At the same time, the golden goose of ever increasing TV money will expire next year – just when Fulham has to pay for its £75m new stadium.

As at Arsenal, which has to fund an even grander replacement for Highbury, financially astute fans wonder how either club will finance such extravagances now the game's TV paymasters have either gone bust or are no longer willing to play fantasy finance.

Further evidence that Fayed is feeling the pinch came in May when he closed *Punch*. This ego trip lost £2.2m in the year to August 2001 on income of just £383,000. Each £1 earned by the magazine cost £3 in sales expenses alone to produce! Total losses had exceeded £15m with more added in the months leading up to the closure. No wonder Fayed felt he could not go on.

for the euro, page 15, July 15 — the president of the European Central Bank, Wim Duisenberg, was inadvertently transposed into Dim Wuisenberg.

Guardian, 17 July 2002

THE British Virgin Islands, a Caribbean tax haven of choice for companies linked to Ken Bates and Mohamed Fayed as well as the bearded wonder Richard Branson, is in the grip of an escalating corruption scandal so severe that the foreign office has requested help from the City police to assist in the widening inquiry.

The scandal comes at a difficult time for the BVI, which has only recently removed itself from the tax haven black list compiled by the OECD after agreeing to improve its anti-money laundering laws and provide greater transparency and cooperation.

Already three senior local BVI officials have been charged, including former financial secretary Allen Wheatley. The charges relate to contracts awarded for the new international airport. But there are also inquiries into other public works contracts. Wheatley, two officials and a local businessman are accused of defrauding the government of $850,000. Wheatley is already standing trial on a separate charge with another businessman of defrauding the government of $72,000 by obtaining payments to companies they controlled for work that was never done.

All of which paints a less than glowing picture of one of Britain's last bits of empire that already makes a stellar contribution to tax avoidance and evasion.

Take for example the BVI's crucial role in the marketing of so-called employee benefit trusts (EBTs), a device used in the scheme whereby the Inland Revenue sold all its offices to companies controlled offshore as detailed by *Private Eye* in previous issues.

EBTs, as they are known in the tax trade, are regularly used for buying UK properties, often in deals used to shelter bonuses paid to City big hitters in the days when there were bonuses.

The scheme usually works like this. A UK company arranges for the creation of an EBT offshore, in Jersey, the Isle of Man or Gibraltar. It then makes contributions to the trust which is for the benefit of key employees such as top executives. The contributions are corporation tax deductible.

The offshore trust then lends the contribution to a BVI company. The interest paid back is tax free. The BVI company gears itself up with a big bank loan and buys a UK property. The rent from the UK property is tax free because it is paid to a non-resident landlord in the BVI. However, the BVI company could still face UK tax on any profit it makes. So the trick is to ensure that the interest charges plus admin costs at least equals the rent thereby removing any profit.

The tax-free interest paid to the EBT means it should make around 7 percent to 8 percent. And of course when the property is sold the capital gain will be tax free as it is payable in the BVI and 100 percent of that also goes tax free to the EBT.

The trust can make payments from its income or capital gains to those key employees for whose benefit it exists either by way of dividends or cash payments to non-residents. UK residents will face at most 25 percent income tax.

These schemes are likely to become even more popular from next year when the ceiling on national insurance contributions is lifted. Payments of bonuses via dividends from an offshore EBT will save the recipients not just the difference between 25 percent tax on dividend income and 40 percent top rate income tax but will also save both them and their employer a whole lotta NIC. And the company will also benefit by obtaining the tax deduction on its contributions to the EBT.

Meanwhile it's good to see Britain ensuring the BVI is cracking down on crime!

ENCOURAGED by the lord chancellor Lord Irvine and the attorney-general Lord Williams, efforts are still being made to bring

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

WE'VE SUBCONTRACTED MAINTENANCE, RENEWALS, RECRUITMENT, INSPECTION AND HEALTH AND SAFETY...
...BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY?
YEP – THAT AS WELL!
CRASH!
122.

Stock Horror

'New Labour, New Britain'

Value of £100 invested* under Blair & Brown in...

£36 Technology

£61 Engineering

£61 Transport

£71 Leisure & Media

£202 Tobacco

*Sector performance since 2 May 1997, from top 350 companies on the Stock Exchange

former judge Richard Gee to account for defrauding the legal aid board.

Gee escaped a second trial for assisting a £1m mortgage fraud – the initial 1998 jury could not agree on a verdict – after the then attorney-general Lord Morris decreed it would be too stressful. (Morris was also there when it was decided Andersen should not face a US trial for helping John De Lorean defraud the British taxpayer.)

Like so many men in suits who claim illness when faced by the inside of a court, Gee quickly recovered and is now alive and well in the US. He is estimated to have received up to £700,000 in legal aid, despite being a circuit judge and having a wealthy wife. He was paid his full salary of up to £92,000 from his arrest in 1995 until he resigned in 1999, just as "Derry" was about to sack him for misconduct.

Since then Scotland Yard has been investigating Gee's assets which were not disclosed to the legal aid board. This has entailed inquiries in Jersey which led to Switzerland and now the US. The inquiries have identified bank accounts and companies linked to Gee.

Last year the crown prosecution service took the view that the evidence was not strong enough to bring fraud charges against Gee. But pressure from the lord chancellor's office backed by the attorney-general have resulted in further inquiries now being made via the FBI into Gee's American lifestyle and assets.

What their lordships would like would be to hit Gee with an extraditable fraud charge which would either see him brought back to face trial in Britain, perhaps to be defended by his friend Lord Morris QC, or if he could not be brought back to create circumstances in which his £25,000 a year pension payable in five years' time, could be challenged. Such action could run foul of the human rights convention, but fighting it in court would mean Gee would have to spend his own money while not getting any more of the taxpayers.

FORMER Labour minister Jack Cunningham may well face considerable further embarrassment as a result of his acceptance of suspected fraudster Virendra Rastogi as a client for his Brinkburn Associates consultancy.

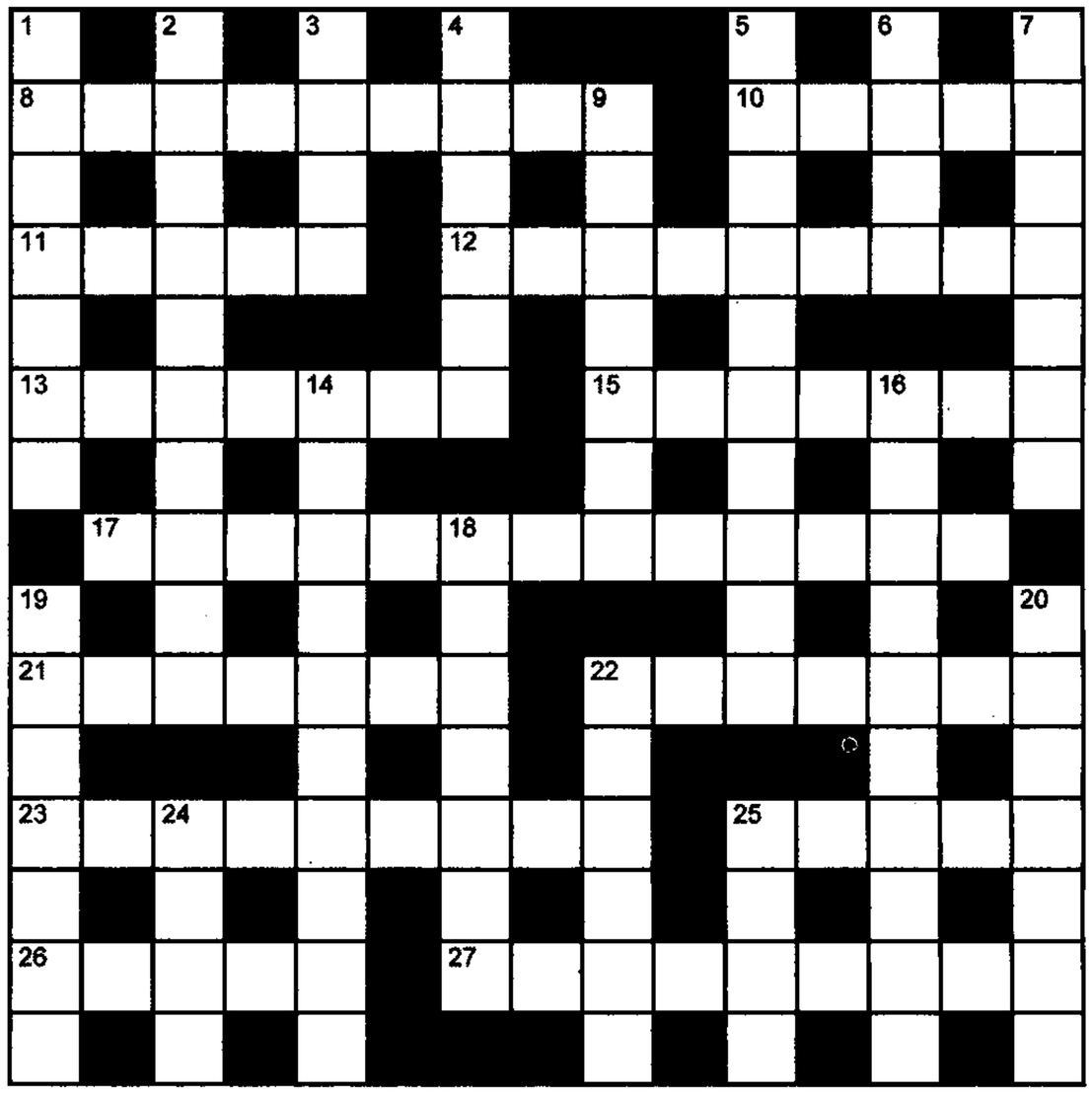
Cunningham was signed up by Rastogi's RBG Resources in 2000. However, it has since emerged that Rastogi was already under police investigation at that time. City police had begun an investigation into alleged bank fraud by RBG the previous year. Which does not say much for any due diligence Cunningham carried out before taking the Rastogi cheque.

The Serious Farce Office and FBI are investigating what could be one of the biggest ever Ponzi-style bank frauds costing an assortment of banks up to $600m. Cunningham's client Rastogi was arrested while trying to destroy documents and is now on police bail.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 214

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 2 August 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

8 Sticking one finger's end right in, one approaches behind (2,7)

10 Russian leader's somewhat misplaced contribution (5)

11 Gilbert & George openings sounded hell (5)

12 Cardinal donning female underwear in a position to catch something? (5,4)

13 Sang note followed by identical notes during shag (7)

15 Fear about pubic region organ protection (3-4)

17 Obsessively motionless? (4-9)

21 Rails against cryptic-style shit (4,3)

22 Shook, going double topless and sporting tits (7)

23 Junkie has to swipe loaf (5-4)

25 Goodness calls for a lot of money, a lot of money (5)

26 Virgin's temporary barrier means Carol possibly carrying last bit of luggage (5)

27 Regards exercise as early sign of excessive masturbation? (3,6)

DOWN

1 Infantile, shit robber is $1000 down without a robbery (3,4)

2 The type who'd easily attract a young woman to the bar (4-6)

3 Seat — the source of many a politician's speech? (4)

4 Plied with pub meals, threw up (6)

5 Maurice, suffering with DTs, gets pissed (10)

6 Piss taken out of '*Pop Sails*' (*Rolling Stone*) ... (4)

7 ... "a pop group-stifled drug-affected exercise" (4-3)

9 Begging-letter from temptress after bonk fails to reach climax (7)

14 Throw up on becoming engaged — reprimand follows (10)

16 Cliff providing opportunity for humiliated Romeo to go down? (6,4)

18 Sex tremendous, having relentless secretion (7)

19 Not the definitive rock band's rock band reference book (4,3)

20 Hack on the way out, going against the current (7)

22 Comes back to life and pants? (6)

24 Brief shot perhaps of American ex-Minister (4)

25 Bottle internal organs (4)

Crossword 213 winner: SHEILA WRIGHT

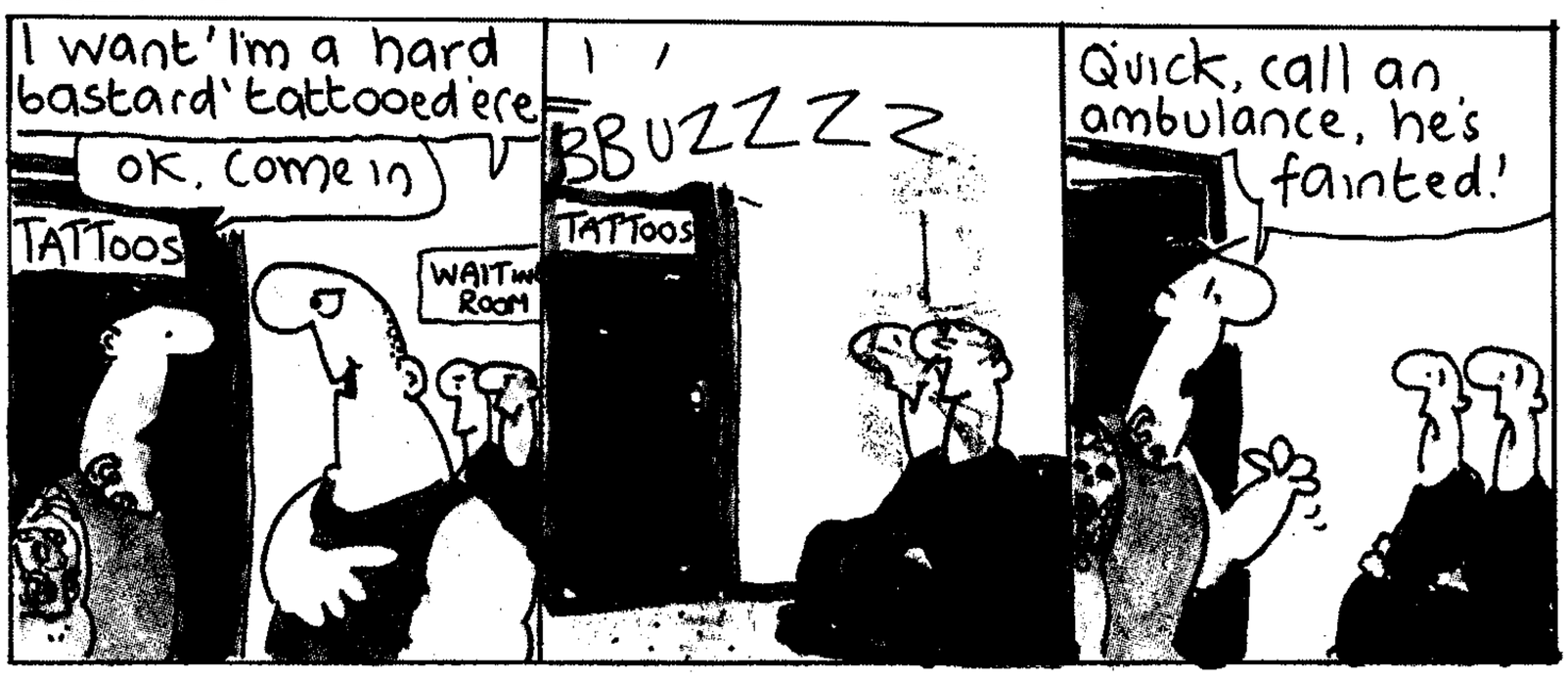
Solution to Crossword 213

ACROSS: 1 Hairdo 4 Jack shit 10/28 Going into a flat spin 11 Pay up 12 Norma 13 Smart arse 14 Spandex 16 Oncost 19 Bang on 21 Pair off 23 Plastered 25 Awash 27 Astor 29/1D Her royal highness 30 Screws.

DOWN: 2 Icier 3 Dog-eat-dog 5 Avocado 6 Kaput 7 Hey presto 8 Topped 9 Unisex 15 Alabaster 17 Climactic 18 Afghanis 20 Nirvana 21 Piddle 22 Splash 24 Torso 26 Ample.

Yobs

HUSBAND



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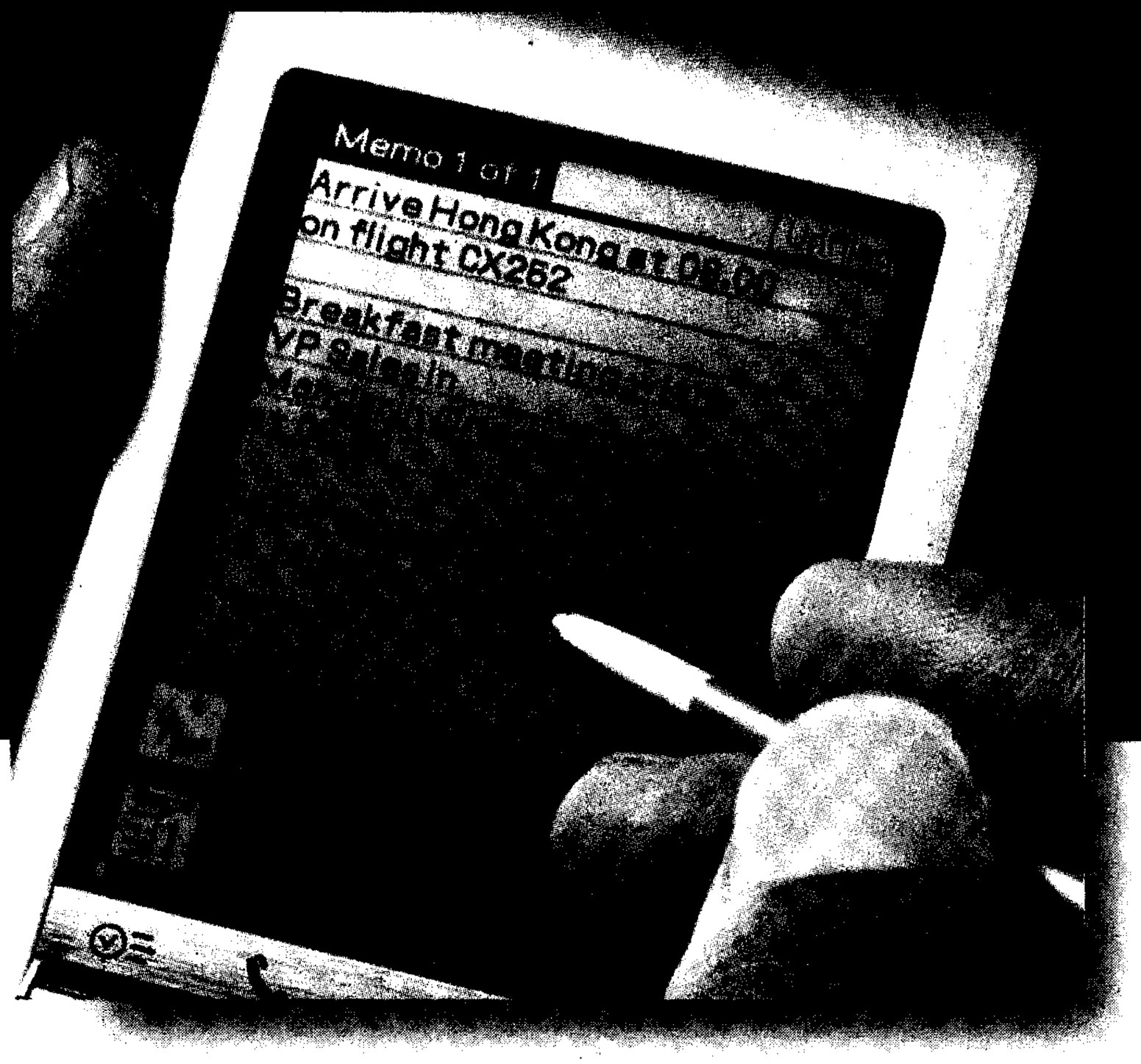

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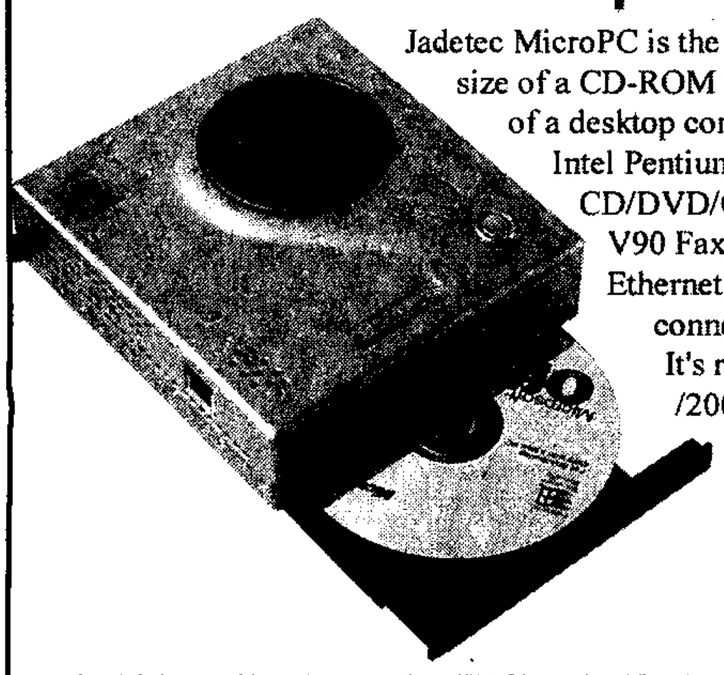

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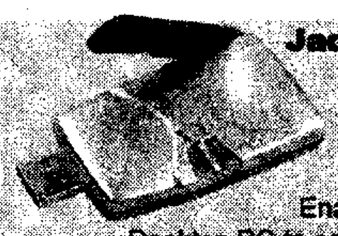

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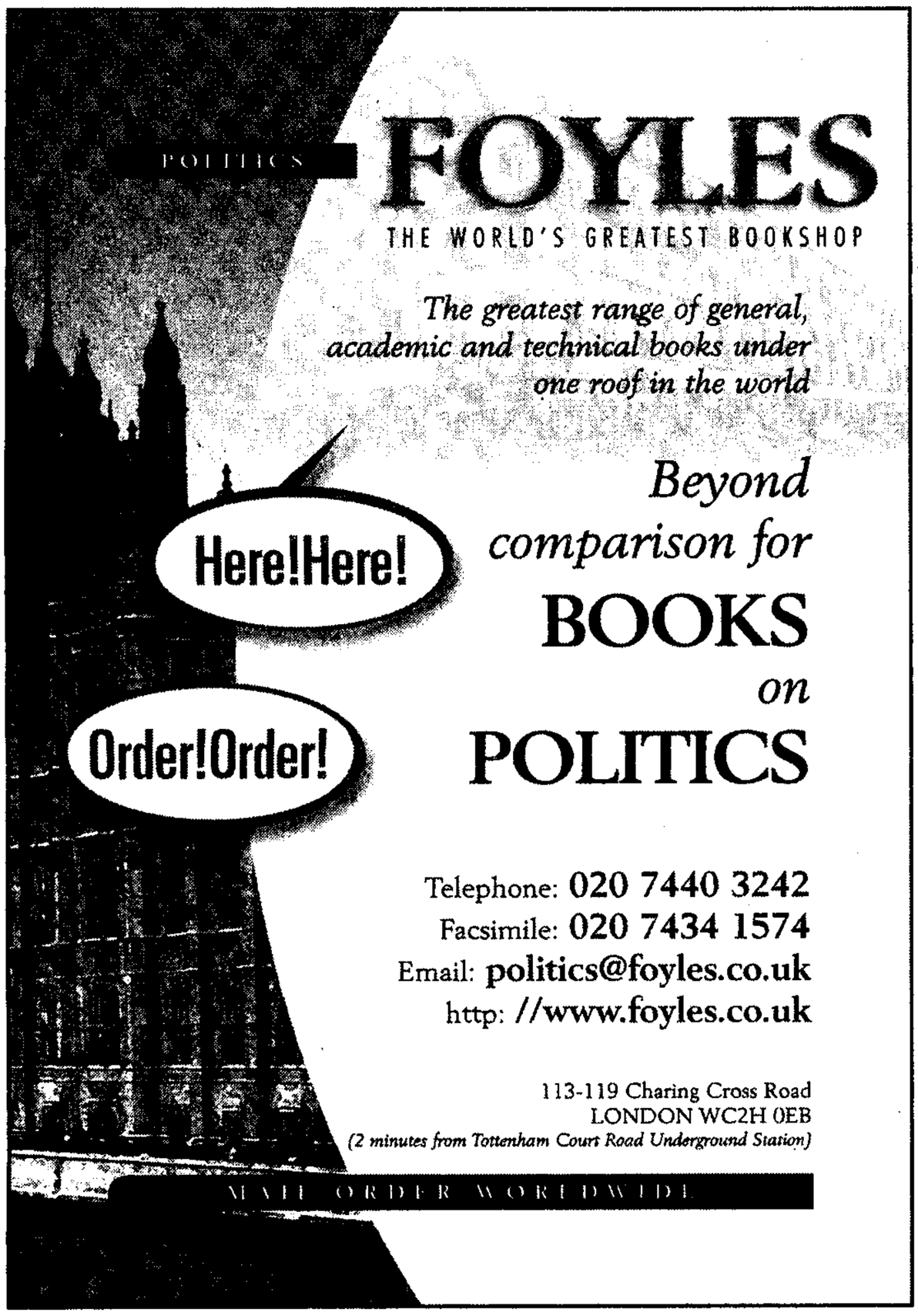

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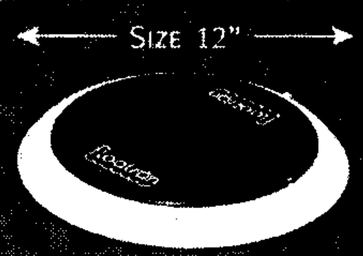

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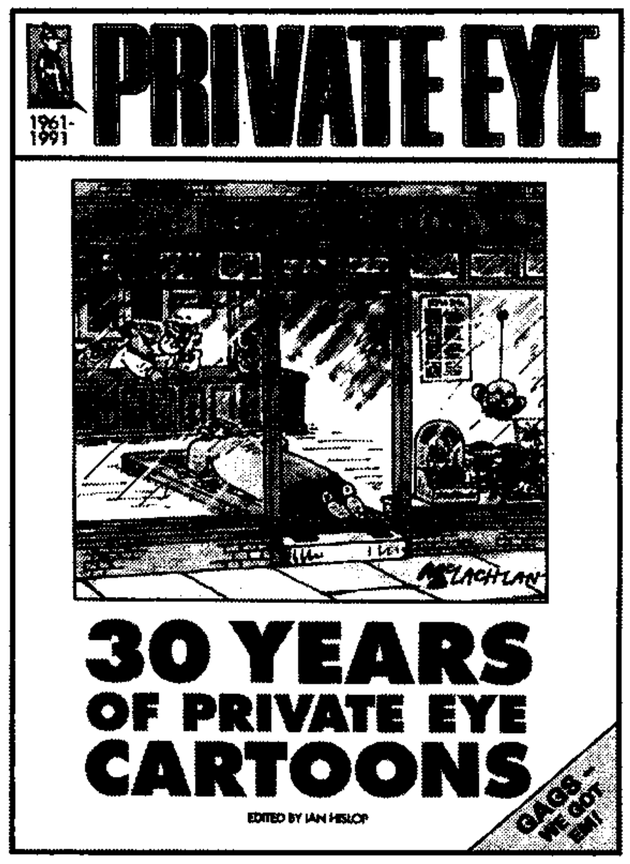

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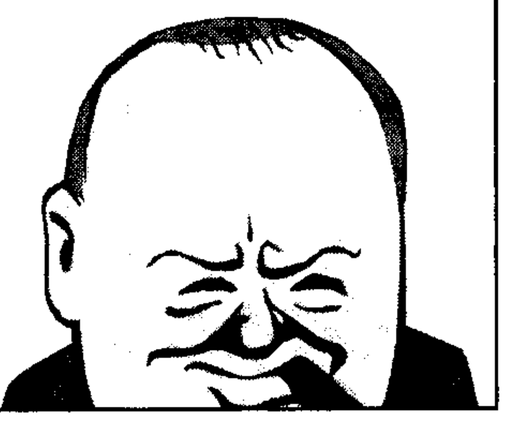

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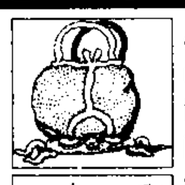

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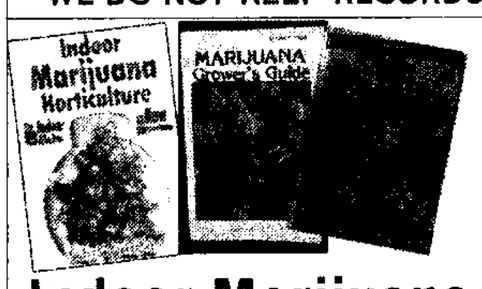

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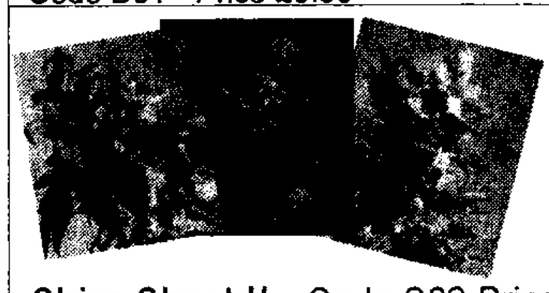

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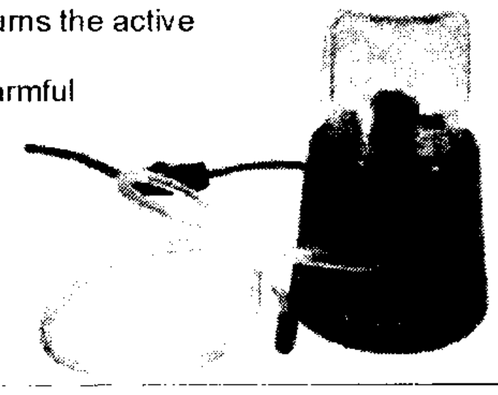

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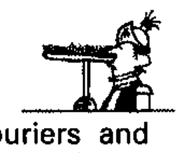

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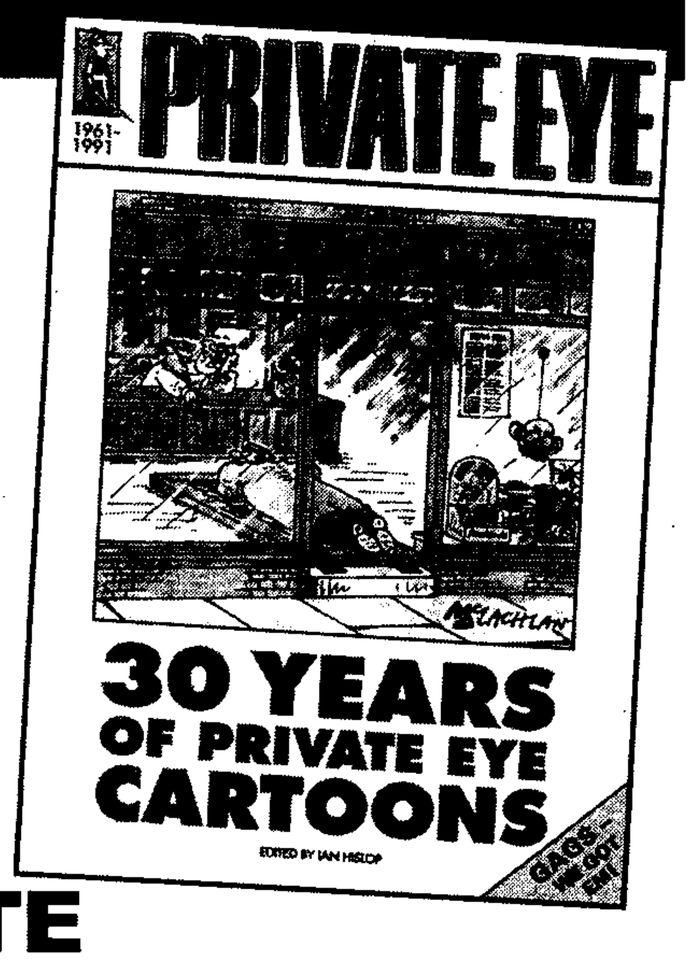

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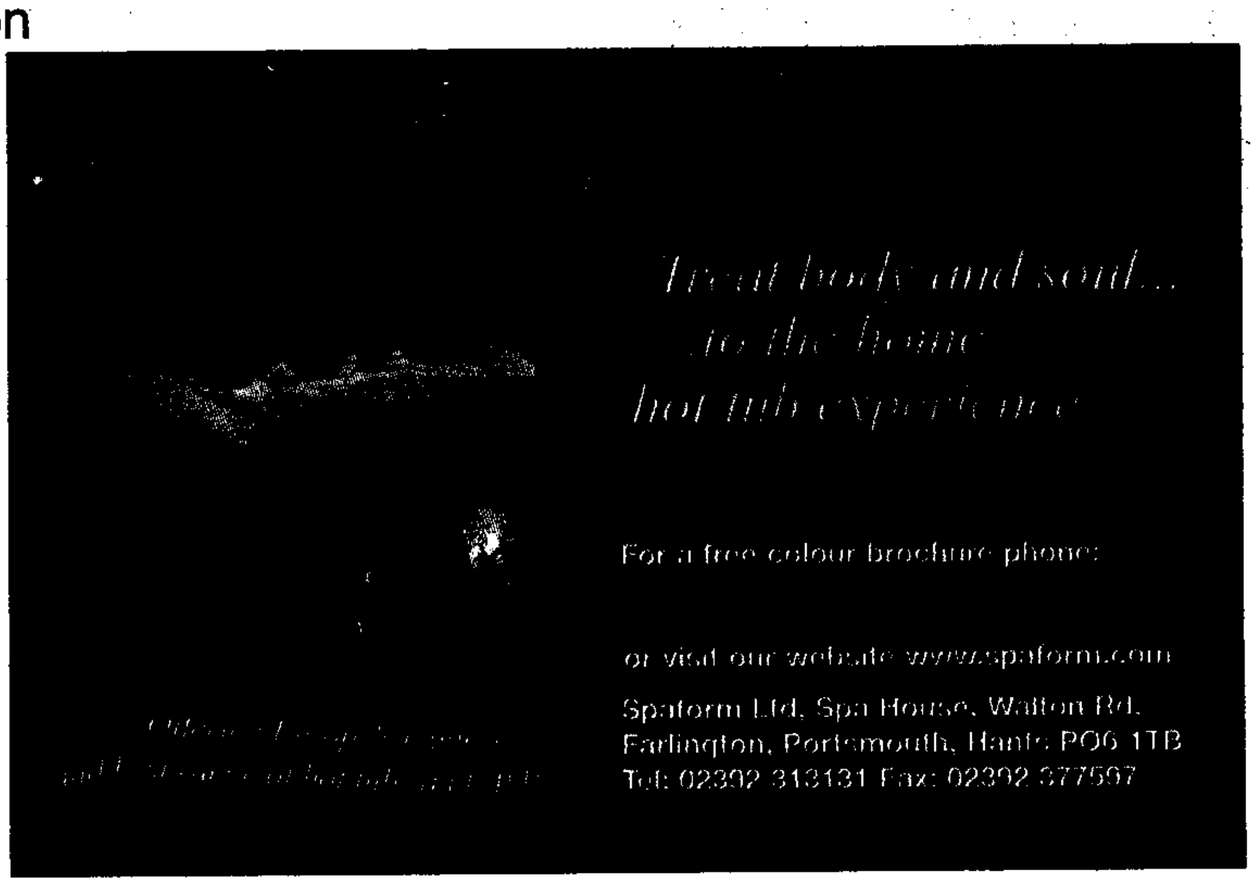
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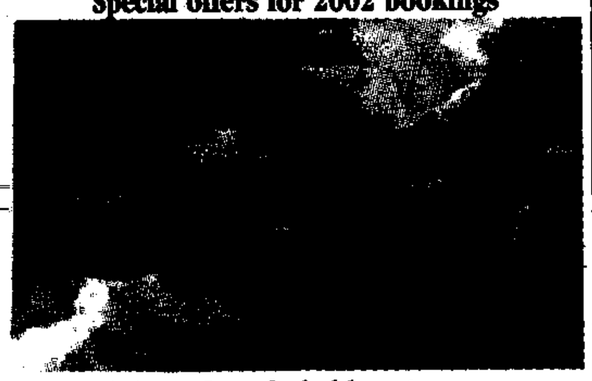

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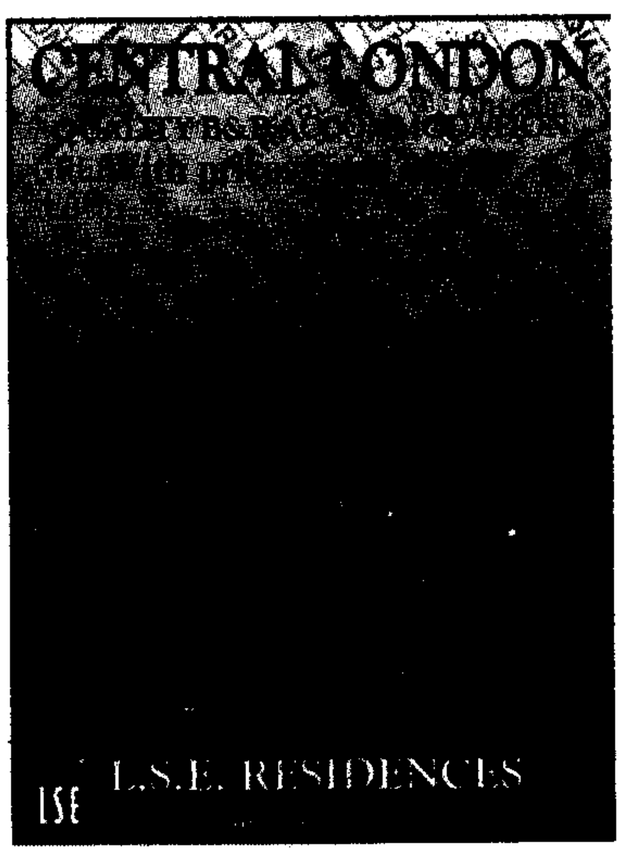

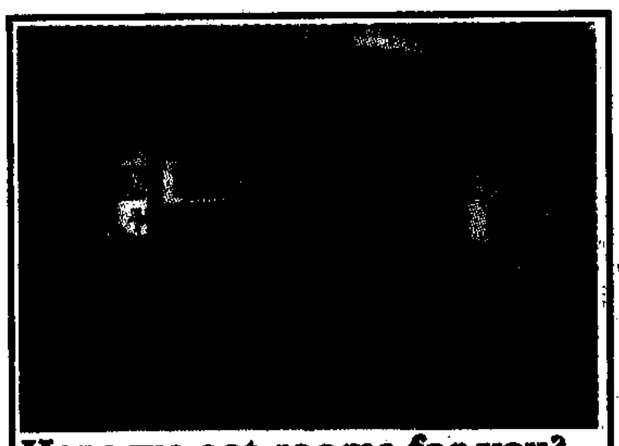

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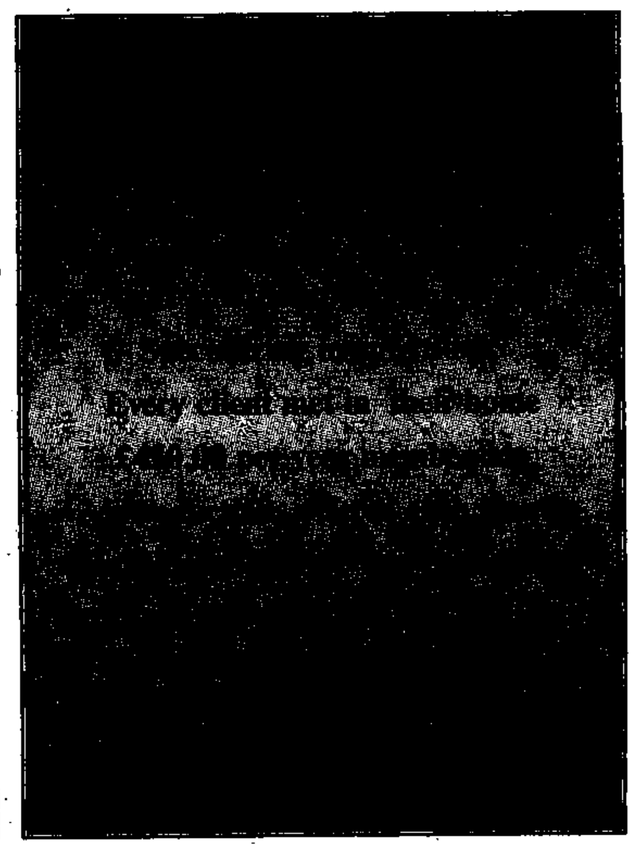

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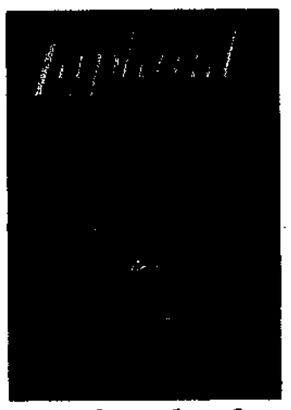

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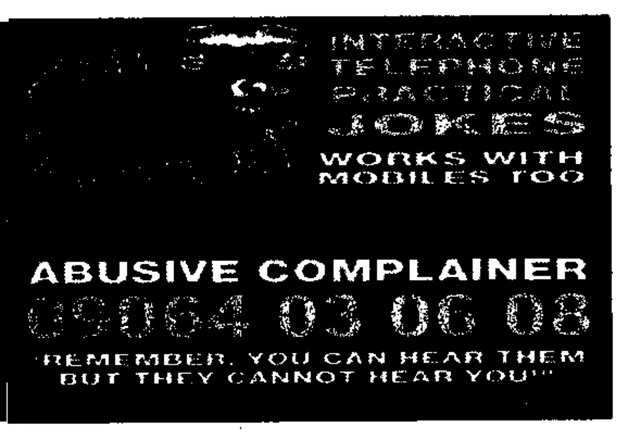

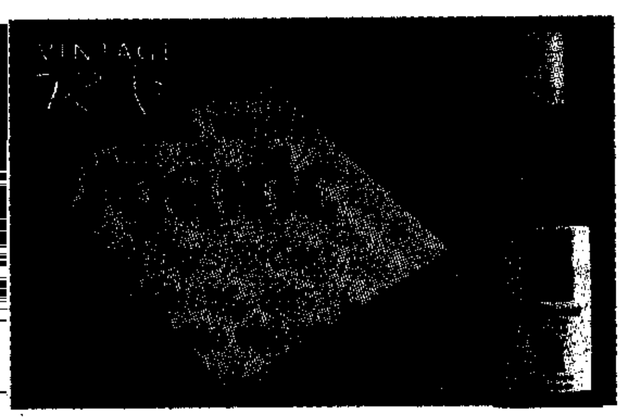

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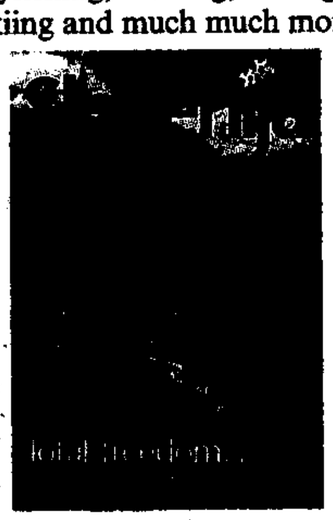

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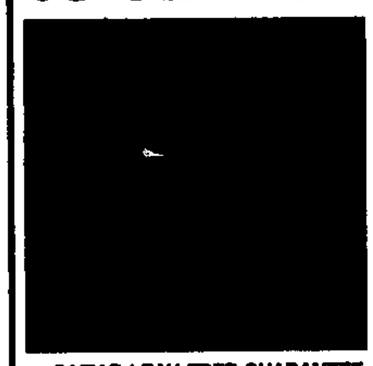

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HASEL 5 Piece Brass Hose Fitting Set
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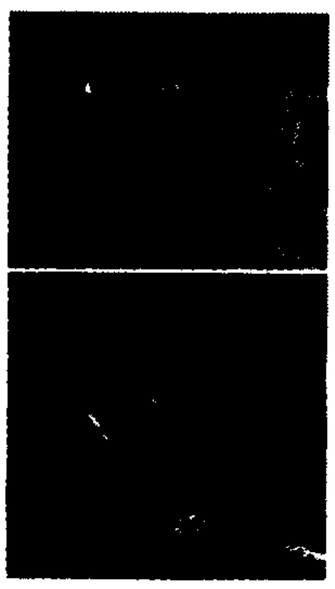
Use it as a concert hall – or a sanctuary.

The Bose® QuietComfort® Acoustic Noise Cancelling® Headset.

Think of it as a mute button for the world around you. Whether you're irritated by the engine roar on aeroplanes, noise of the city or bustle in the office, this headset lets you hush them all. And it does it with the flick of a switch. You savour delicate musical nuances in places where you couldn't before. And when you're not listening to music, you can use it to quietly enjoy a little peace. Clearly, the Bose QuietComfort headset is no ordinary headset. It's no exaggeration to say it's one of those things you have to experience to believe.

Reduce noise with Bose technology. One of the most highly respected names in sound, Bose has developed advanced technologies to offer you benefits never available to you before. *Whole Earth* describes this headset as "perfectly wonderful," especially when you "need to listen anywhere there are a lot of background distractions." That's because the QuietComfort headset actively monitors and counteracts unwanted noise and reduces it before it reaches your ears. It recognises what you're about to hear and compares it with what you want to hear – music, or silence itself. Patented Bose technology then counteracts the noise and delivers the sound you want. *Upscale* magazine calls this headset "revolutionary." Respected columnist Rich Warren hails it as his "product of the year." *Stereo Review's Sound & Vision* reports that it "can be a terrific antidote for delayed flights, engine noise, crackly airline headphones, and all the other nuisances passengers encounter."



Enjoy your music with Bose sound quality. The QuietComfort headset arrives ready to use with your portable CD/DVD player, home stereo, laptop or office computer, and in-flight entertainment systems. As *Men's Journal* reports, it "puts the wearer in a zone of blessed quiet, then fills the ears with rich stereo sound." The *Boston Globe* calls the audio quality "superb." *MSNBC.com* columnist Rudy Maxa finds it "stunning." Just what you expect from Bose.

So comfortable, you may forget you're wearing it. With a weight of only 153 grams (5.4 ounces), the QuietComfort headset nestles lightly around your ears. Audio critic Mark Fleischmann calls it "the most comfortable full-sized pair of headphones I've ever used," with the "softest earpads I've encountered in 30 years of wearing headphones."

Try the QuietComfort headset for yourself risk free. We don't expect you to take our word for how dramatically this headset reduces noise, how great it sounds, and how comfortable it feels. You really must experience it to believe it. Call us free to try the QuietComfort headset for 30 days in your home, at the office or on your next trip – satisfaction guaranteed. Use it to think, work and relax in peace. Listen to music or an in-flight film with its clear, rich sound. If you love this headset, keep it. If you can bear to part with it, simply return it for a full refund of the purchase price. No questions asked.

Call Bose free on 0800 085 85 72. This headset is available directly from Bose. *Airfax.com* reports that "you will not regret one penny spent" on it. You can also take advantage of our instalment plan and make **five low interest-free monthly payments***. Call today to enjoy a very different kind of headset – the Bose QuietComfort headset.

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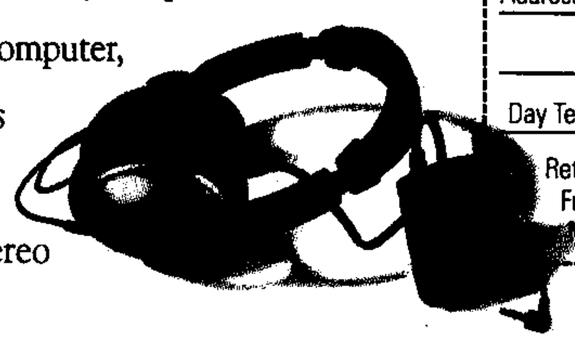

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